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*'Monkey Business': an artist's action research into the parameters of
temporary gallery installation through reflexive formal and informal
documentary practice*

Andrew McNiven

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the School of Arts and Social Sciences

September 2010

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Abstract:

The term ‘installation’, referring to both process and product, is a significant component of contemporary fine art practice and the working lives of those involved. Consequently ‘installation’ can be seen as a domain of both fine art professional development and practice-led research. However, as art historian Mary Ann Staniszewski has observed (1998), the implication is that as process, this is an under-researched field of knowledge and this Ph.D. is an attempt, through a thesis and a body of practical work, to address this omission.

Writing as an artist with significant experience as a technician, the thesis explores the insights that inform the work of technicians, using related theoretical concepts which map the conditions particular to the processes of installation: that of exhibits being subject to a binary condition, which I term ‘proper/improper’, and the concept of ‘tacit knowing’, developed by Michael Polanyi (1966) as an index of specialist embedded understanding. Both ‘proper/improper’ and ‘tacit knowing’ are concealed by the sense of what I term ‘effortlessness’ that makes displayed objects part of an immutable fabric of exhibition culture. This is, in turn, compounded by the photographic ‘installation shot’, a form of documentation that, for commentators such as the writer and artist Brian O’Doherty (1976), creates idealized images of artworks.

In reflecting upon the action research I have undertaken in order to penetrate the idealized surface of the ‘installation shot’, the thesis journeys from the visual to the aural in order to open up the ‘sensual

culture' (Howes, 2005) around 'installation'. Although not directly setting-out to respond to Staniszewski's proposition, the experiments with sound practice described and exhibited do, I claim, offer a creative response to our amnesia and an unfolding re-presentation of the processes and conditions of exhibition as it is currently experienced throughout museum and gallery culture.

Acknowledgements

This research has been made possible through a Doctoral Award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Additional financial support has been provided by the East Lothian Educational Trust, and a Kerr-Fry Award from the University of Edinburgh. I am grateful to the following for allowing me to either photograph or make sound recordings: Ashmolean Museum, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Berwick Barracks, Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, the British Museum, Camden Arts Centre, Castle of Otranto, the Freud Museum, Gracefield Arts Centre, Hereford Museum and Art Gallery Inverleith House, Kelvingrove Museum & Art Gallery, Glasgow, Kunsthaus Bregenz, La Nuovo Arca, the Laing Gallery, Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice, Musée des Beaux Arts, Lille, National Gallery, London, National Museum of Scotland, National Museum of Wales, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Northumbria University, Otranto Cathedral, Paxton House, Pitt-Rivers' Museum, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Sine Die, Bari, Italy, Sir John Soane's Museum, Swedenborg House, London, Tate, Stedelijk Museum, the Wallace Collection, Wyese Arts Centre, Zeppelin University.

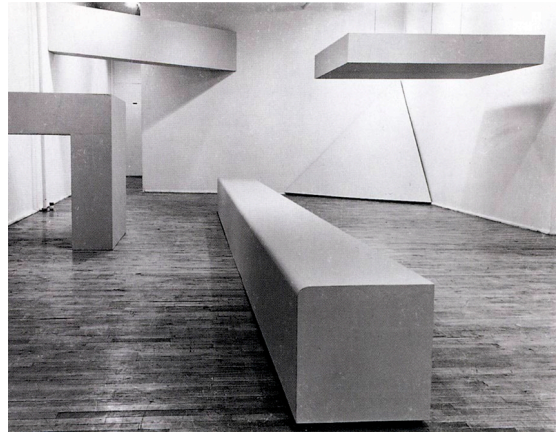
In supporting and making possible much of the research I am grateful to the following individuals: Chris Osborne of BALTIC, Chris Webster of Tate, Professor Dr Karen van den Berg and Ulrike Shepherd of Zeppelin University, Ursula Zeller of the Zurich James Joyce Foundation, Gill Hart of Modern Art Oxford, Julie Brock of Sir John Soane's Museum, Pamela Jahn of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Liz Pugh of Rhayader Museum and Professor Cheryl Buckley, Mike Gallon, Linda Howes, Andrea Percival and Andrew Poole, all from Northumbria University. Pia Wallgreen, Katherine May, Mark Tauman, Jane Martin and John Lavell supplied invaluable additional material. Ikuko Tsuchiya provided installation photography. The practice-led research group at Northumbria University dispersed many anxieties. I am most grateful to my supervisors Fiona Crisp, Chris Dorsett and initially Jim Harold, who have steered a tricky project with admirable patience and acuity. Without my family, especially Shân Edwards, none of this would have been possible. This thesis is dedicated to Archie and Rose McNiven.

Declaration:

This work has not been submitted for any other award.

It is the sole work of Andrew McNiven

21st September 2010



I. Robert Morris: Installation at Green Gallery, 1963

Introduction:

The contemporary art object, when it is placed in a space in order to be seen, becomes the product of a process called 'installation'. This term, now so familiar through the rapid development and diffusion of the fine art practice for which the art historical term 'installation art' has been coined, qualifying a product rather than a process, has a distinct progenitor in the activities of the art gallery technician and in the processes of installation. This thesis and its accompanying body of practical work is, in its adoption of documentary practices, in the main concerned with the use of the term as a product, although, as the reader will discover, there many moments where the distinction breaks down and the two realms can be discussed easily as one field of creative endeavour. However, the most straightforward way to introduce the topic of my research is to evoke the specialist activity of installing exhibits in a gallery. If it is a new artwork being installed, within this process of installation the testing and tuning of the work will occur. If it is an older work, much of the testing and tuning will have occurred previously and may be applied by the artist or those with specialised knowledge of the artist's work in relation to the space into which the work is placed. This is a crucial arena in the development of artists' work. It is when the works' final

form is established and is also the point at which some work can fail to make the transition from studio to exhibition.

The condition of exhibition is usually understood as a fixed proposition, a conclusive final state.¹ It is the point at which the installation photograph of a work will be made, fixing further the work's static condition in the image's onward trajectory through transmission. As most artists' work is not on display and able to be viewed at any given time, it is the reproduced condition within which the artwork will often be critically evaluated, assessed and ultimately enter art's discursive and historical arena.

The processes of bringing a work to exhibition, between the entirely experimental and private working space of the studio to the constrained viewing space of the gallery are often glossed over in art's discourses as a transitional condition of artists' work, the simple mechanical process of location in its proper place.



2. (l) Anish Kapoor, with vacuum cleaner, during 'Void Field' installation, 1989

3. (r) Anish Kapoor, Void Field, 1990 Lisson Gallery installation,

¹ I have seen work being further refined during the process of exhibition, but this is unusual. It is more usual for a work to be changed or revised after or between exhibitions.

An example of the importance of the transitional processes of installation is the first installation of Anish Kapoor's (b.1954) 'Void Field', at the Lisson Gallery in 1989.² I was assistant gallery manager at the Lisson Gallery at the time. The work was made up of roughly-quarried granite blocks approximately 120 cms. square, each with a circular hole 25-30cms wide cut into the uppermost face. This was filled with very dark blue pigment – the 'void' of the title. The work filled the space into which it was installed. Kapoor had originally devised the work with the blocks spaced more closely than in the final version. When we installed the work as Kapoor had devised and directed, it was apparent that the blocks were too close to one another and needed to be re-spaced. At between 1 and 1.5 tonnes each this was a major exercise. It also meant that a number of blocks had to be removed from the installation. As a simple exercise of trying and testing, however, this process served its purpose and refined and improved the final version of the work. It was also integral to the making of the work as it was part of a process where a number of significant formal decisions were made and the image of the work was fixed. The work does, of course, vary, relative to the space in which it is shown, however, the basic form and spacing was made through this process. There is often a strong element of contingency and improvisation in this act of testing and tuning; elements embedded within the transitional process of installation and within artists' practice.

Inherent in the practices and processes of installation is a demonstration of the idea of 'tacit knowing' as a process identified by Michael Polanyi in 1966. Tacit knowing as described by Polanyi is a non-linguistic, non-numerical form of knowledge that is personal, context specific and rooted in individual experiences, ideas, values and

² This same work was also used as Britain's official entry for the 1990 Venice Biennale and was the work for which Kapoor was nominated for in the year he won the Turner Prize.

emotions. (Polanyi: 1966) Tacit knowing could be described within the context of this research as the experience of knowing when something is 'right'.

Polanyi's ideas and their refinement and development by others provide a useful way of understanding both the testing and tuning that occur within the processes and practices of installation, but also in the way that this understanding is shared amongst those involved: the artists and technicians. Much of my working life has been spent within this context as both an artist and technician and this has allowed me to develop a specialised understanding and insight into these processes and conditions. Indeed, to be interested in the tacit nature of installing an exhibition is to be aware of the superimposition of the sensibilities of the artist and the gallery technician and this research project has involved a constant interaction between both activities.

Throughout my career I have experienced this specialized understanding as I moved from creative production to creative installation and this research project, as I reflected on the content of this 'specialness', has informed and motivated my ideas as an artist. As a result, at the key point in the development of my research – the shift from the photographic documenting of installations to audio recordings of exhibition environments and exhibited objects – I noticed that the process of discovery was both an intellectual engagement with theoretical questions and an experimental involvement with the different sensory experiences that can be included in a fine art practice. For example, in Chapter 4, I discuss two new sound works made at the Wallace Collection in London.



4. Andrew McNiven and John McCracken (b.1934), Lisson Gallery 1989

This specialised understanding, therefore, extends to a highly tuned sensibility around the ongoing processes and conditions of exhibition as much as installation, constituting more than just an attention to detail or a closed reading of specific signifiers. At its simplest, the ‘understanding’ derives from a sense of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ within a particular context; a sense of when something succeeds in its intention, or when it fails. It also comes from a recognition and acknowledgement of protocols, devolved from direct experience within ‘high end’ exhibition practice, in both the installation and the maintenance of shows.

The site of much of the exhibition practice focused on in this research is the evolved, contested, but ultimately durable modernist art space; the ubiquitous ‘white cube’, the history of which encapsulates much of the history of art in the 20th and 21st centuries.



5. Tate Britain, London

Within what could be called the implicit ‘etiquette’ of the modernist art space, and also in the wider culture of making exhibitions, there lies an idea of ‘effortlessness’ in production; a sense of things just existing, as if they had always been there. This sense of ‘effortlessness’ frequently seeks to suggest that the objects displayed are in some way installed permanently and have always been so; that they are somehow part of an immutable and unchanging fabric of cultural production. I shall expand and further define this idea of effortlessness in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

The illusion of effortlessness and permanence is abetted by the complicity of the conventions of installation photography which will fix the work and its context through the process of the photograph’s transmission (the topic of Chapter 3). Having evolved over the last century, the installation photograph has become, in a sense, its own form, entering into a significant and symbiotic relationship with the art it represents. Walter Grasskamp, the historian of *documenta*, has gone so far as to say that

you cannot understand the exhibition of art without installation shots.³ At the outset of my research I proposed that the concept of ‘installation’ could have two dimensions: ‘on’ and ‘off’; that is, before the public and therefore available for reception (installation as product) and concealed from the public and thus restricted from view (installation as process). When Grasskamp speaks of exhibitions requiring photographic realisation he is describing a situation in which an installation is permanently ‘on’ however temporary the actual period of public access to the exhibits (although, in effect, the condition I try to describe is more complex than the presence or absence of an audience). As a result, it seems as if there is no moment in which an installation can be usefully ‘off’. I have explored this state of affairs as a protocol (or form of etiquette) in which ‘on’ and ‘off’ carry the value of being either ‘proper’ or ‘improper’. I treat my own explorations of the installation shot as a method of stalking exhibition spaces. In this way I have tried to creatively subvert the code of manners that have come to dominate our attitude to exhibition practices.



6. Günther Becker, *documenta III*, 1964

The complicity of installation photography in secreting the creative processes of the gallery technicians that have made the exhibited material look ‘right’ (an important concept in the initial stages of my research) leads me into an extended discussion of

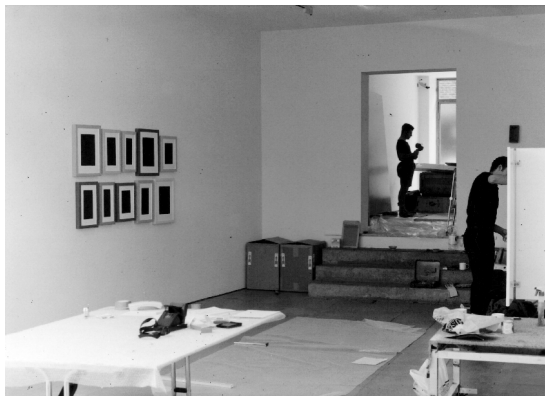
³ Grasskamp was speaking at the ‘Landmark Exhibitions’ Symposium at Tate Modern (October 2008). All references to Grasskamp throughout the thesis are based on the notes I took during the conference.

documenting both exhibition installations and installation art that moves beyond the visual document to that of the aural recording (Chapter 4). Being an artist-researcher my treatment of this interesting area of sensory perception and aesthetic appreciation is driven by the pace of discovery within my practice; therefore Chapters 4 and 5 (an evaluation of the scope of research) form a textual commentary that attempts to capture the sudden expansion of possibility that accompanied the development of my gallery recordings. However, in order to begin our journey toward this point I need to establish the context of research and the background experience I bring to my project. To begin with (Chapter 1), my thesis describes the type of space that is being researched. This is primarily a matter of art history and many of the ideas that emerge in this discussion will be modified as I move on to the issues and concerns that motivate an artist-researcher.

I: Installation and exhibition space

This chapter will establish three ideas about the space in which exhibitions are exhibited: firstly we will examine the role of exhibiting practices within the recent field of fine art practice; secondly we will draw out the observation that the installing of exhibitions is an under-researched means of cultural production; lastly, we will locate the concept of gallery installation in the more general context of modernist art space, the cultural environment against which I developed my practice as an artist and a researcher.

1.1: Installation as an idea and a practice:



7. (l) Lisson Gallery: Installation in progress, 1990

Real Allegories. Work by Allan McCollum (l) and Julian Opie (r) - also pictured on (r))

8. (r) Installation view of the exhibition 'Ad Reinhardt', 1991, Museum of Modern Art New York

(Photograph by Mali Olatunji, © 2008 Estate of Ad Reinhardt / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York)

As I said above the use of the word 'installation' within the context of this thesis refers to both the physical process of realizing an exhibition, (the preparation of the space, the actual installation of the work; "gallery closed for installation") and the

net result of this process, (the arrangement, the context, “the installation created a narrative of...”) The word has also come to be understood to describe a kind of art that is immersive, for which the term ‘Installation Art’ has evolved. The art historian Mary Ann Staniszewski, in her book ‘The Power of Display: a history of exhibition installations at the Museum of Modern Art [New York]’ has written of exhibition design and installation, as a distinct form of cultural production, as having been ‘...generally speaking, officially and collectively forgotten...’ (Staniszewski, 1998: xxi) She ascribes this neglect or ‘amnesia’ to a formalist approach to the object within art history, the ephemeral nature of exhibitions and an idea of the art-work’s autonomy, that it was somehow a discrete object, entire unto itself and wholly distinct from the space and context within which it was placed. (Staniszewski, 1998: 307) She chooses New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) as a useful paradigm of cultural production, reception and distribution within its field. MoMA and its exhibition practices can certainly be seen as a presiding influence in any discussion about the ways in which exhibitions of modern and contemporary art are realized.

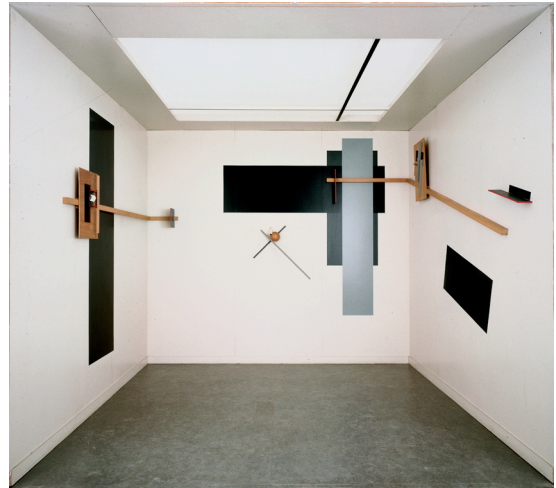
Alongside this observation must be considered the role of the artist as the curator, arranger, editor, designer, fabricator of their own work within the exhibition space; this is perhaps overlooked to an even greater extent. Irrespective of the detail of their individual practice, most artists are obliged to work in a close relationship with the space into which their work is placed, or becomes part of, and also with the processes that enable this. Much of this relationship exists beyond the evidence of material culture, and is often undocumented or simply regarded as a means to an end. It is, to all intents and purposes, invisible. The knowledge accrued is, in many cases, the ‘stuff’ of the working lives of artists as well as the many others involved in realizing exhibitions of all kinds and it is when and where many decisions about *how* something

will be positioned – literally and theoretically – within the framework(s) of reception are determined.

There is often a clear shift in any exhibition space as it moves from being the private space of cultural production and practical labour to being the public space of cultural reception and consumption; an entirely different set of protocols or understandings inhabit the space in these different modes. One is fluid, the other fixed; one is provisional, the other established; one dynamic, the other static; it must, however, be understood that these conditions are interdependent. The contemporary curator and theorist Hans Ulrich Obrist (b. 1968) describes this condition neatly when writing about the highly influential prewar director of Hannover's Landesmuseum, Alexander Dorner (1890-1957). Obrist states that Dorner understood '...the museum as an oscillation between object and process.' (Obrist: 1998: e-mail, see Appendix 3)

Installation Art, as an immersive form distinct from discrete painting and sculpture, can be traced back to the experimentation of early modernism, when many artists, architects and designers worked across and into each other's fields⁴, to the Suprematist *Proun* experiments of the Russian artist El Lissitzky (1890-1941) which he described as the 'the interchange station between painting and architecture.' (Lissitzky-Kuppers, 1968: 325) At the *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung* in 1923, Lissitzky was given the use of a small square space. Instead of hanging existing paintings, he decided to put new *Proun* compositions with reliefs on the walls, thus creating a three-dimensional *Proun space*.

⁴ The immersion of the viewer in sites such as the Sistine Chapel notwithstanding.



9. El Lissitzky, *Prounenraum*, 1923, reconstruction 1971, courtesy of Van Abbemuseum

The work of the German artist Kurt Schwitters, (1887–1948), in which he constructed spaces that both contained and were, in effect, his work, surrounding the viewer, prefigure the contemporary idea of installation art. A series of such works were called the *Merzbau*, and Schwitters constructed a *Merzbarn* during his exile in Cumbria, UK, a section of which is preserved in Newcastle University's Hatton Gallery. There is, of course, some intersection between 'installation' as a descriptive term and 'installation art' as an art historical term. The late 20th century processes of art moving beyond the frame and into the space around it is, in itself, a tacit acknowledgement of the significance of the processes of reception in relation to the uses of the space of reception. As this happens the site of production and the site of reception become fused, and must be considered concurrently, in a way that has not been seen since, perhaps, the late Baroque when paintings became increasingly secular and autonomous of their site of display.

The period of late modernism, of art becoming increasingly focused on mass audiences and the spaces of museums, rather than the domestic spaces of collectors' homes, created a context which was permissive and fertile for artists seeking to engage with and use entire spaces. A clear and distinct form began to emerge. This way of

working with and often through spaces evolved through the 1970s and writing at the time of the 1982 *documenta*, the critic Germano Celant notes: '...[it] (installation) is in and of itself a form of modern work'. (Celant, 1982: 373)

Since the late 1980s 'installation art' has figured increasingly within the production, presentation and reception of art. The extent to which it has reached and engaged with a significant mass audience is demonstrated by the Unilever Series of installations in the turbine hall of Tate Modern in London since 2000, where site-specific installation works by Louise Bourgeois, (1911-2010), Anish Kapoor, (b. 1954), Juan Muñoz, (1953-2001), Rachel Whiteread, (b. 1963), Olafur Eliasson, (b. 1967) and Doris Salcedo (b. 1958) amongst others, have transformed and extended the popular experience of looking at art for millions of visitors. The term 'installation' referring to a particular kind of contemporary art practice has entered the popular lexicon.

1.2: Context and point of departure: Donald Judd & Monkey Business

The initial starting point and title of this research was in Donald Judd's 'Statement for the Chinati Foundation (1986) in which he states (of temporary installation in relation to permanent installation):

It takes a great deal of time and thought to install work carefully. This should not always be thrown away... Otherwise art is only show and monkey business. (Judd, 1986: 111)

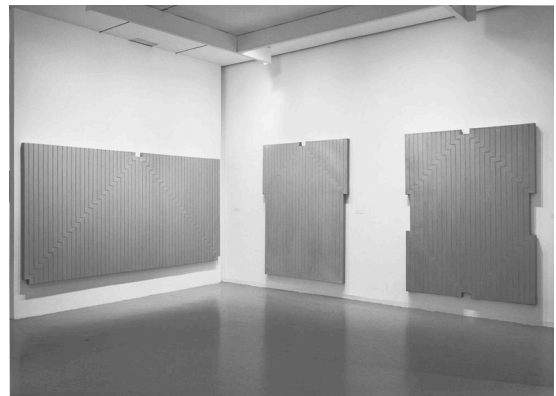


10. Donald Judd, installation at Portland Center for Visual Arts, 1974

Judd identifies the process of installation as being central in the production of knowledge within visual practice, identifying that it is much more than the simple mechanical process of placing and arranging things on walls or in spaces. Temporary exhibition installation is the primary mode of display and therefore the major distributive medium of artists' practice. In a wider context it is central to any kind of exhibition, from the glossy marketing of the Motor Show to the Venice Biennale, from every art school's degree show to major international museums and as such is clearly not 'monkey business'. Outside of the purely commercial, temporary installation is the way in which most artists, curators and museum professionals show what they do and have, how they think and what they think, and operates beyond the textual; it is the primary mode for the transmission of the visual and experiential aspects of works of art and museum objects.

For many artists, the visible part of what they do is, in Judd's term, 'monkey business'; it is temporary. The 'great deal of time and thought', the process of working not just with one's ideas, but with an exhibition space or site, is lost; only through the documentary conventions of installation photography does something of it become permanently inscribed. The physical evidence of work, of endeavour, of social and philosophical interaction - what the French theorist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) has

called 'the production of space'⁵ (the title of his 1974 book) - is diminished, framed and fixed from a single viewpoint and all subsequent knowledge of the work is transmitted and mediated through installation photography. This developed as a distinct form through the fifties, sixties and seventies, when its conventions became relatively fixed, in what the Irish artist and writer Brian O'Doherty (b. 1934) describes in his highly influential 1976 discussion of the relationship between art and its spaces, 'Inside the White Cube' as 'one of the teleological endpoints of the modern tradition'. (O'Doherty, 1976: 34) These conventions conform to a projection of the late Modernist 'ideal gallery' which, as defined by O'Doherty's critique, 'subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is 'art.' (O'Doherty, 1976: 34)



11. Installation view of the exhibition 'Frank Stella, Paintings' 1970, Museum of Modern Art New York, Photograph by James Matthews © 2008 Frank Stella / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

My practice as an artist has negotiated continually the problem of Judd's 'monkey business'; the majority of my exhibited works have been destroyed or painted over, and now exist as unique images, from a static viewpoint. The works' physicality, its careful insertion into spaces, its own 'production of space', only remains as a kind of palimpsest within the images.

⁵ Lefebvre contends that there are different modes of production of space from natural space to more complex spatialities whose significance is socially produced. (Lefebvre: 1974)



12. Andrew McNiven, 'Remote Sensing' 1993, installation at Whitechapel Gallery
(photograph by Stephen White)

The initial enquiry within the research looked to how one could make something of the significant transitional processes and conditions of installation visible, to translate and transmit this through photographic documentary and art practices.

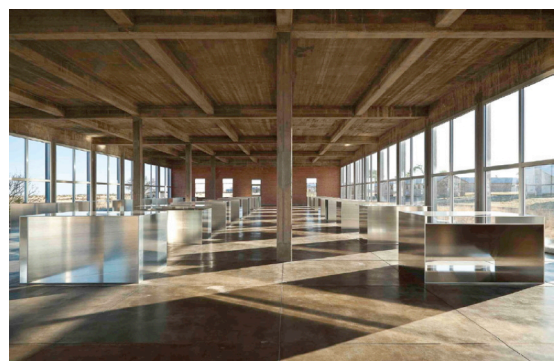
1.3: The legacy of imperious late modernism

Judd's approach towards temporary installation needs to be understood in terms of the time period in which he operated and his own relationship to museums and galleries and their commitment to his work, and the work of others he admired. Judd rose to prominence in the early sixties and his career developed during a period in which contemporary art (and American contemporary art in particular) became ever more institutionalised, physically, philosophically and financially. One could say that it became professionalised, right across the board to a much greater extent than it had previously and artists became more involved in the manner and context within which their work was shown, traded and operated. Judd thought of many institutional approaches and attitudes towards artists' work as highly limited. He sought what he

thought of as a greater commitment to artists' work, a highly engaged, extended and less transient approach to the processes and details of display, and carrying this through to artists' practice, the objects produced and the inherent seriousness of this practice.

Judd sought a permanent home for his work and the work of others, selected by him, somewhere where they could be installed permanently, something beyond the powers of most museums. Judd collaborated with the Dia Foundation and established his own museum at a disused military base, in Marfa, a small town in West Texas. This became the Chinati Foundation, with the intention of providing permanent exhibitions of Judd's work and the work of others, and in which he succeeded in many of his ambitions for the work. In his 'Statement for the Chinati Foundation, he writes:

It takes a great deal of time and thought to install work carefully. This should not always be thrown away. Most art is fragile and some should be placed and never moved again. Somewhere a portion of contemporary art has to exist as an example of what the art and its context were meant to be. Somewhere, just as the platinum iridium meter guarantees the tape measure, a strict measure must exist for the art of this time and place. (Judd, 1987:111)



13. Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas. Donald Judd, 100 untitled works in milled aluminium, 1982-1986

The proposition and the aspiration that the context will remain somehow static is, of course, beyond anyone's control, and demonstrates Judd's tendency to absolutism, especially in matters of installation. The imperiousness of this phase of modernism

extended beyond the colour-field painting's requirement of *liebensraum* identified by Brian O'Doherty. (O'Doherty, 1976: 8) The context will, of course, change through temporal and cultural shifts. We cannot regard a Renaissance altarpiece installed in the same site since its creation with the same eyes or minds of those that viewed it at that time. However, the ambition of fusing an object with the environment in which is displayed is a resonant one for artists, and a central part of the practice of exhibitions. Embedded within this exhibition practice, implicit in the way in which exhibitions are realised, is an impression of effortlessness. I shall examine the idea of the impression of effortlessness in relation to installation in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Artists of the generations succeeding Judd, for whom the absolutes of this period seem absurd or grandiose must however consider their work in territorial terms and in their abilities to expand within and beyond the gallery space. In asserting the primacy of the work, and the importance of its relationship to the space into which it is seen and understood, the late modernist artists established a model for the art space as a site of production as much as a site of consumption and aesthetic interest and provided the beginnings of a useful context for the interrogation of the values and contradictions of the institutions of art, beyond the formal and aesthetic.

1.4: The modernist art space



14. (l-r) Installation at Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven: Julião Sarmiento, *Metropolis*, 1991. Mirosław Balka, *River*, 1988-'89, Niek Kemps, *Sevillanas I-IV*, 1992, Juan Muñoz, *Conversation Piece*, 1994

The presiding context for the display and reception of the overwhelming majority of artists' practice is the white-walled 'neutral' modernist art space and it is within this space, that I understand and know well that I placed the research. Brian O'Doherty describes it thus: 'An image comes to mind of a white, ideal space that, more than any other single picture, may be the archetypical image of 20th-century art' (O'Doherty, 1976: 24) Despite much recent experimentation, especially around art as a social process, little has changed. Writing in her 2009 exploration of the art space: 'Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000', the German art historian Charlotte Klonk notes, with particular reference to the relational experiments in 2007's *documenta 12* that: "We are hardly challenged in our accustomed habits as consumers when we walk at a leisurely pace through stylish and generously proportioned gallery rooms whose dimensions disappear in the magic glow of the white walls' reflections." (Klonk, 2009: 222)

Most of Donald Judd's work is located within, and made for, the modernist art space. All of Judd's work meets the space into which it is placed to be seen and is therefore in a complex relationship with that space. The space that Judd was inevitably required to work with was the durable modernist art space and its (minor) variants. It is the same art space that most contemporary art of the last fifty or more years has been placed within, is in a relationship with, and the space that is in most artists' minds in the production of new work.



15. Installation view of exhibition 'Donald Judd' 2006, Tate Modern, London

The modernist art space has its roots within early modernist European exhibition practice, such as those used in Weimar Germany at the *Landesmuseum* in Hannover, but was refined and evolved in its use in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the 1930s by the Museum's first director, Alfred H. Barr Jr. The modernist art space 'returned' to Europe in the post-war years and became the arena for the institutional evolution of modernism, the transition into post-modernism, the development of institutional critique and the architectural and spatial *lingua franca* for much visual art production worldwide. In physical terms, it has remained relatively unchanged in the last fifty or so years. It could be likened to an A4 sheet of paper, the thing upon which ideas are inscribed, or as a hub, the place around which ideas meet, converge and depart, or as a paradigm, in itself a representation of a set of ideas or positions.

1.5: Exhibition design and the international avant-gardes



16 (l) Samuel Morse, *The Louvre*, 1833. ⁶



17. (r) André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri, *Salon Carré, The Louvre*, 1855 Courtesy of Fine Arts Museums, San Francisco

The presiding style for the exhibition of western art in the nineteenth century was the ‘salon’ style. This reflected ideas of the discrete work of art and paid little heed to context or even the visibility of what was shown. The ‘salon’ style was used to show both historical and contemporary art. In these exhibitions paintings were hung in a symmetrical pattern and covered every available part of the vertical hanging surfaces, often with little or no gaps between frames. The walls were covered in red velvet, diminishing light levels. Hanging spaces were detailed with cornices and dadoes, adding to the overall visual busy-ness of exhibition galleries. Sculptures, which were mostly statues of figures, were shown in groups, usually on high plinths, and were seen as discrete objects with context again largely disregarded – although they could be used as formal architectural elements to make a room grander or assert a greater degree of symmetry. The term ‘salon’ derives from the major exhibitions simply called ‘*Le Salon*’ held in Paris every year under the auspices of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, initially in the *Salon Carré* of the Louvre and after 1855 at the *Palais de l’Industrie*. These

⁶ Samuel Morse (1791-1872) is better known as the inventor of Morse Code. He was also a fervent campaigner against Roman-Catholicism.

exhibitions, a version of which existed in most western countries, such as the UK's Royal Academy Summer Show, dominated western art in the first half of the nineteenth century. They used a hierarchical system of hanging which favoured, in turn, history painting, portraiture, genre, landscape and finally still life. Paintings were hung in this order, to the tops of the walls. Even in the mid-nineteenth century artists balked at the way it diminished their work. Edgar Degas (1834 – 1917), for example, believed work could be shown in ways other than those of the *Salon*. He writes in a letter of 1870 to the *Paris-Journal*: “rather than crowd works up, down, and across the walls, the *Salon* should install only two rows,” and that within these rows the paintings should be “separated by at least twenty to thirty centimetres and positioned according to their own demands instead of those preordained by traditional patterns of symmetry.”

Degas goes on to assert, with prescience, that ‘the primary concept determining installation should be the integrity of the individual artist and the individual work.’ (Ward, 1991: 600)

Many of the artists associated with impressionism and post-impressionism moved away from the *Salon* as an institution and ‘salon’ style in the exhibition of works, and crucially this eventually served to diminish the *Salon*’s role as the institution in which artists’ work was validated. Artists’ work was increasingly seen in smaller private galleries; indeed the independent and autonomous commercial gallery as we now understand it started to develop around this time, with gallery-dealers like Paul Durand-Ruel in Paris and galleries such as the Grosvenor and New in London.⁷ These galleries used the kinds of spaces which were able to emphasise the work over the

⁷ In 1887 the Grosvenor Gallery was the first gallery to be lit electrically, with its own generators, and evolved into a full-blown power station, supplying much of central London. (Electricity Supply in the U.K.: a chronology, The Energy Council, London 1987, p 6). One of the New Gallery’s spaces survived conversion into a both a cinema and a church and still exists as part of the Habitat store on Regent Street in central London.

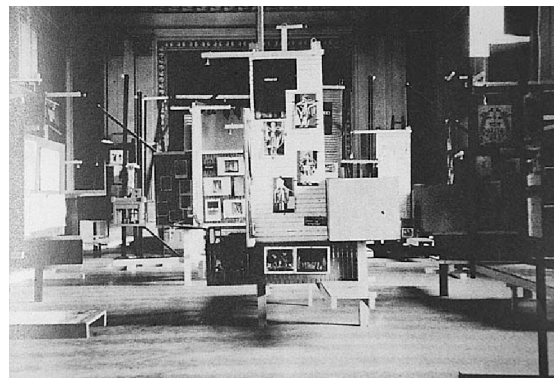
institution and in formal terms started the evolution towards the modernist gallery space which has replaced the 'salon' style space for the last century or so.



18. The Grosvenor Gallery, London, c. 1887 (note electric light fittings)

In the culturally volatile early years of the twentieth century, artists and designers saw the possibilities in exhibition design as comparable to, or part of, a burgeoning mass media. This was the time during which a pervasive media as we might understand it began its evolution - film, radio, avant-garde theatre, advertising, illustrated magazines, popular publishing – all emerged or adapted quickly and experienced rapid growth. Exhibitions of all kinds played a significant role for international avant-gardes as testing grounds for ideas, innovative installation designs, approaches to seeing art, objects and ideas. It was a period of great ambition, invention and innovation in exhibition practice of all kinds. Many of the exhibitions of this period would still appear radical to contemporary eyes, with dramatic use of space, materials, means of hanging and approaches to form and chronology.

Frederick Kiesler (1890 -1965) an Austro-American theatre designer and architect regarded the design of exhibitions as a new medium in itself, most specifically in his design of the 1924 *Internationale Ausstellung neuer Theatertechnik* (International Exhibition of New Theatre Technique) at the *Konzerthaus* in Vienna. (Of which he was also the curator.) This was a significant event within the international avant gardes and included work by artists El Lissitzky, Leon Bakst, Alexandra Exter, Natalia Goncharova, Fernand Leger, Francis Picabia, Enrico Prampolini, Hans Richter, and Oskar Schlemmer.

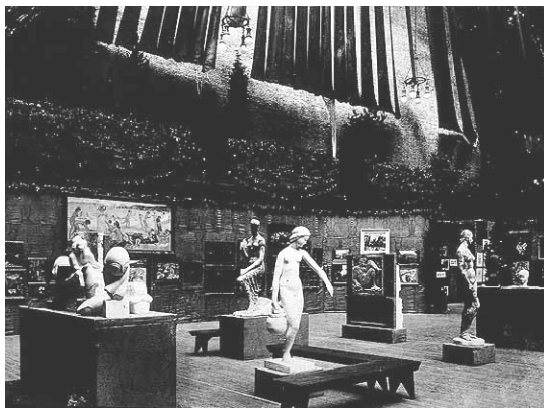


19. Frederick Kiesler, *Internationale Ausstellung neuer Theatertechnik*, 1924

For the *International Exhibition of New Theatre Technique* Kiesler developed what he called the L & T system, (*leger* and *trager*) allowing work to be physically separated from the form of building, the architecture of a room, thus breaking from ‘salon’ or other styles – he was interested in: ‘creating “open” systems, projects, and environments in which meanings are shaped by the specific determinants of time, place and function.’ (Staniszewski, 1998: 8) These ideas have obvious parallels with wider exhibition practices – not just those within art – as we understand these now. They also fed back into ideas about how art was exhibited and point to future in which art became a lexicon for other ideas.

Paradoxically, two of the most celebrated and significant early modernist art shows were relatively conventional in their installation: the International Exhibition of

Modern Art in New York in 1913, (known as the Armory Show) was shown in a nineteenth century manner, close to salon style, and organized by nationality and medium. This was somewhat at odds with the radical nature of some of the work it contained. It did, however, serve to introduce American audiences to modern European art and its ideas. Almost contemporaneously in Russia, Kasimir Malevich (1879-1935) and others in the 1915 '0,10: Last Futurist Exhibition of Painting' assertively and uncompromisingly illustrated the desire to break from traditions in their work, but the installation retains the methods of the salon. Linda S. Boersma, in her book about the exhibition, suggests that all the work would have been installed, in a highly competitive atmosphere, on the day of the opening due to the artists' fear of 'professional espionage' and stealing elements of what was an entirely new vocabulary. Malevich and Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953) ended up in a fistfight during the installation, to be separated by Alexandra Exter. They exhibited in different rooms, Tatlin adding a distinguishing notice: 'Exhibition of Professional Painters'. (Boersma, 1994:46)



20. (l) Armory Show, New York, 1913.



21. (r) 0,10: Last Futurist Exhibition of Painting, St. Petersburg 1915

In 1922 Alexander Dorner (1890-1957) became director of Hannover *Landesmuseum* in Germany and inherited galleries organised according to traditional

practices, arranged in symmetrical salon style with 'works of art treated as harmonious room décor.' (Staniszewski, 1998: 16) Tradition dictated hanging according 'to the fashion of contemporaneous connoisseurship and, since the founding of art history as a discipline in the eighteenth century, they were also installed in a more 'scientific' manner: that is, chronologically and by schools.' (Staniszewski, 1998: 16)

Dorner reworked the Austrian Formalist art historian Alois Riegl's (1858-1905) idea of *Kunstwollen*: 'culture envisioned as unfolding of the aesthetic spirit' (Staniszewski, 1998: 16) Riegl had discussed this span as running from antiquity and finishing with the Baroque but Dorner reconfigured it as infinite, to encompass the modern, contemporary as well as the 'primitive', dispensing with Riegl's closed historical framework.

Dorner's concerns exceeded the purely formal or aesthetic and he created what he called "atmosphere rooms" that evoked period and immersed the viewer in a specific culture and in his writings *Ueberwindung der Kunst*, (Going Beyond Art), he emphasizes that he intended to dynamize the static museum and to transform the neutral space in order to assume a more heterogenous space. (Dorner, 1947)

The contemporary Swiss curator and writer Hans Ulrich Obrist (b.1968) regards Dorner as a highly significant figure in the development of the art gallery as we might understand this and has identified Dorner's position as one in which the museum – the art museum in this case - was a self-transforming institution.

Dorner succeeded in pseudo-neutral space of the 19th century which was still prevailing and to get to what to functions which accompany a museum today. The importance of Dorner lies in the fact that he anticipated very early the urgency of issues such as: the museum in permanent transformation within dynamic parameters: a dynamic concept of art

history: the museum as an oscillation between object and process: the multi-identarian museum: the museum on the move: the museum as a risk-taking pioneer: to act and not to wait!: the museum as a locus of crossings of art and life...: the museum as a laboratory: the museum as a relative and not an absolute...

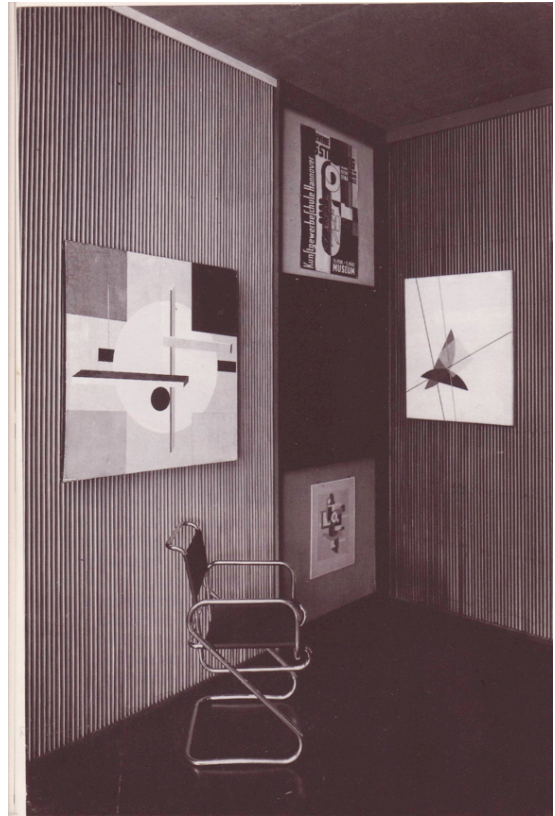
(E-mail to Eyebeam mailing list: 1st April 1998)

This outlines an institutional as much as a spatial framework for the art museum, and the two are entirely intertwined. As Dorner himself wrote:

We cannot understand the forces which are effective in the visual production of today if we do not have a look at other fields of modern life (Dorner, 1947)

Dorner's ideas embraced context as much as content and in 1927 Theo van Doesburg was commissioned to design an exhibition of constructivist art. His design was not used so El Lissitzky was invited to install a version of *Raum für konstruktive Kunst* (Room for Constructive Art) previously installed at 1926 *Internationale Kunstausstellung* (International Art Exhibition) in Dresden. This could be identified as the point at which the modernist space starts to make the transition from being a space solely identifiable with the international avant gardes to being an established and default space for the display of what is still called modern art.⁸

⁸ Escaping from Nazi Germany, Dorner became in 1938 director of the museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, on the recommendation of Alfred H. Barr Jr, director of MoMA. He was removed from this post in 1941 due to his German nationality and his brother being a *Luftwaffe* pilot. He rigourously avoided purchasing work which had been acquired illegally by the Nazis. (Ines Katenhusen (2002) Alexander Dorner (1893-1957): A German art historian in the United States: I)



22. Alexander Paul Walther, installation of El Lissitzky's *Raum für konstruktive Kunst*, *International Kunstausstellung*, Dresden, 1926. Courtesy of Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

The Nazi regime in Germany understood fully the significance of the methods and processes of installation, and used this understanding to significant effect in the 1937 *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition in Munich. The material for this exhibition was gathered from German public museums by a commission directed by an artist favoured by Hitler, Adolf Zeigler (1892-1959). These included many works collected for the *Landesmuseum* by Dorner. In total 650 works by 112 artists were shown. In the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition a kind of anti-installation or inversion of developed practices was employed, which seems aimed specifically to discredit and ridicule artists' work. (Even accessing the exhibition, which was held on the second floor of what had been the university's archaeological institute, involved difficulties with sculptures placed on the stairs which had to be squeezed around.) The exhibition's

installation used poor lighting, arbitrary and crowded hanging, disparaging graffiti around the work – “Madness becomes method”, “Nature as seen by sick minds” etc. A contemporary witness, Paul Ortwin Rave (1893-1962), an art historian and later director of the *Nationalgalerie* in Berlin, recalled:

All the pictures selected... were huddled together in these long, narrow galleries with the worst possible lighting.... The pictures were hung as though by idiots or children just as they came, as close together as possible, obstructed by pieces of sculpture on stands or on the ground, and provided with provocative inscriptions and obscene jibes. (Treue & Creighton, 1960: 233-234)

A photograph of part of the installation shows the work on what look like poor temporary walls, crudely covered in sagging paper. Much of the work was hung on a single cord and does not even appear to have been hung level, with what appears to be a Kandinsky several degrees off true. In another image, which I take to be a press image taken when Adolf Hitler visited the exhibition, the same works, including the Kandinsky, appear to be hung even more erratically with several at c. 45° from true, in a highly exaggerated gesture of disregard and dismissal.

The use in this instance of poor or bad installation to discredit artists and their work serves to support the importance of considered and careful installation as a highly significant, even indispensable aspect of the production of meaning in art. The *Entartete Kunst* exhibition was a popular success, attracting over two million visitors as it toured Germany.



23./24. Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art) exhibition, 1937, Munich.

I.6: MoMA, and establishment of a 'standard' modernist space

The ideas of the European modernist space were refined and its use evolved in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the 1930s by the Museum's first director, Alfred H. Barr Jr. who used his understanding of the significance of gallery space and installation to

... enhance the awareness of the object's, and the individual's independence. This aestheticised, autonomous, seemingly 'neutral' exhibition method created an extremely accommodating ideological apparatus for the reception of modernism in the United States. (Staniszewski, 1998: 70)

The "power of display" and "its importance to twentieth-century art was foremost in the minds of the individuals working at the Museum of Modern Art during the institution's first several decades." (Staniszewski, 1998: 70)

Having traveled in Europe and having had contact with European avant-garde art Alfred Barr Jr became a postgraduate student at Harvard under Paul J. Sachs (1878-1965). Sachs was a charismatic and innovative art historian, and was the curator of the Fogg Museum at Harvard. His famous “Museum Course” (Fine Arts 15a, “Museum Work and Museum Problems”) was one of the first academic courses to cover museum studies and what has come to be called curating, and existing at a time when many art galleries were being established in the U.S., it provided many museum’s founding directors. Significantly within the context of the discussion of installation and space, Sachs had a formalist approach to exhibiting work that extended to the installation – he established a new way of doing things: his students were taught to hang pictures in a low line – Sachs was 5’ 2”. (the European salon tradition was to hang high and cover every available area). Sachs stated that: “the room itself should be a work of art, created by an artist to arouse the interest of artists.” (Sachs – course outline p.26, undated, quoted by Kantor p.73)

This mantra followed Barr to the Museum of Modern Art, of which he became director in 1929. It was allied with his European experience – the use of wall labels in Russia, moveable walls, exposure to Dörner’s *Landesmuseum*, and other museums in Hamburg, Berlin, Dresden, Stuttgart, Halle, Frankfurt, Munich, Darmstadt, Mannheim and particularly the *Folkwang* Museum in Essen, which impressed Barr with its sparse displays (as recounted by Philip Johnson, interview with Staniszewski, 6th January 1994).



25. Cezanne, Gauguin, Seurat, van Gogh, Museum of Modern Art, 1929

The first Museum of Modern Art exhibition was the 1929 'Cezanne, Gauguin, Seurat, van Gogh' and photographs of the exhibition show it as one that would be entirely recognizable and contemporary to us now. The works have space around them, are hung at eye-height, the walls and floor are neutral – the floors look to be either pale marble or terrazzo, and the walls are covered in 'monk's cloth' – a fine kind of beige canvas; it is described as being brownish – no colour images exist. The work is lit evenly, the walls washed rather than spotted with light.

Over the first few years of the Museum of Modern Art's peripatetic existence, Barr established a simple and rigorous exhibition aesthetic, including a standard horizontal centre height for hanging paintings of 60 inches (152 cm), work spaced to operate individually and neutral walls, originally covered in a brownish linen 'monk's cloth' and later – to the horror of the architect Phillip Johnson – white paint.⁹ As the reputation of the Museum developed, and through the great period of European cultural upheaval caused by the Second World War, translocating many of the European avant garde to the U.S., the museum assumed a central and world-leading role in the exhibition of modern art. Despite its conservative underpinnings, its activity and approach to the exhibition of artists' work became the *de facto* benchmark for all

⁹ MoMA standard height of 152 cm is still widely used in many galleries. It works very well.

museums of contemporary art, a position it held until, arguably, the opening of Tate Modern in London in 2000. In addition to this it extended the range of what such a museum could exhibit, showing design, photography, material culture and artefacts and reflecting a period of rapid change and development. (It still does, but the model of a museum of modern and contemporary art exhibiting something of the wider material culture of its own time has atrophied to an extent and has never become established in Europe, or has migrated to evolved and devolved discrete institutions. In the UK for example, the V&A and Design Museum might show this kind of material, but not the Tate Galleries.) MoMA was not without its critics amongst the pre-war avant-gardes; the art historian Meyer Schapiro writing in 1937 questioned Barr's separation of art from its social origins, and in the museum's presentation of individuality and creativity in ideological alignment with rich patrons such as John Hay Whitney (1904-1982) and Nelson A. Rockefeller (1908-1979). Barr responded in a way by outlining his own experiences of spending a year in Stuttgart as the Nazis came to power and the repression of "... those painters of circles and squares ... who have suffered at the hands of philistines with political power." (Barr, 1936: 18)

1.7: Europe, post-war: *documenta*, institutional critique

After the hiatus of the second world war the conventions of the modernist art space returned to Europe during the post-war years. Many aspects and conventions established by Barr were adopted influentially by the curator Arnold Bode (1900 – 1977) as an ideal platform for his first *documenta* exhibition of 1955 in Kassel.

Grasskamp has described the initial purpose of *documenta* as an opportunity for the German people, following National Socialism, to re-evaluate modern art.

This could be seen as a process of 're-inverting' the way the art space was used by the Nazis to discredit Modernism. This way of using the space helped to establish the adaptability, 'user-friendliness', alleged neutrality and quasi-democratic credentials of the modernist art space in its use as a vehicle to help ease the German people back into regarding modern art favourably after being told that it was degenerate.

It is during this post-war period through to the 1960s that the conventions of the modernist art space became consolidated, to an extent standardized, tacitly understood and replicated throughout the western world. At the same time there was a general disinclination to experiment with exhibition design and installation, particularly within the exhibition of contemporary and modern art. Exhibitions of design, architecture and photography were often much more adventurous during this period. Notable exceptions within the visual arts include the Independent Group shows: 'This is Tomorrow' at London's Whitechapel Gallery in 1956, 'Man, Machine, Motion' at the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle, and a number of other projects including 'The Parallel of Life and Art' ^{10/11} These shows owed much to the fusion of practices and disciplines embodied in early modernism using a wide variety of material and

¹⁰ The Independent Group met at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London during the period 1952-1955 and consisted of painters, sculptors, architects, writers and critics who wanted to challenge prevailing modernist approaches to culture. They introduced mass culture into debates about high culture, re-evaluated modernism and created the "as found" or "found object" aesthetic. Members included Richard Hamilton, (b. 1922), Eduardo Paolozzi, (1924-2005), Alison and Peter Smithson, (1928-1993, 1923-2003), William Turnbull, (b. 1922), Nigel Henderson, (1917-1985), Laurence Alloway, (1926-1990), Toni del Renzio, (1915-2007).

¹¹ I was a member of exhibition crew at London's Institute of Contemporary Art in 1989 when we recreated the Independent Group's several shows in collaboration with Dartmouth College Gallery in the U.S. It was one of the most challenging installations I worked on, a consequence of both the ambition of the shows and the requirements of historical accuracy.

installation techniques. (Richard Hamilton designed the display systems, down to specialist fixings for 'The Parallel of Art and Life'.) Perhaps most of all they were a reflection of a kind of optimism and the consensual and collective zeal that existed in the early post-war years in the UK. By the late 50s this energy was starting to dissipate and artists' practice was once again becoming individualized.



26. The Independent Group, Parallel of Art and Life, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 1952

Staniszewski has linked the decline in experimentation with the institutionalization of contemporary and modern art and the development of convenient professional formulae of display (Staniszewski, 1998: xxiii). This relative formal and institutional stability and the perception of the modernist art space as now being the formal and formulaic embodiment of the establishment led many artists to develop a critical stance in relation to the spaces in which their work was shown, and much else besides.

A shift started to occur in the late 1960s and the institutions of art were questioned more thoroughly. They began to be regarded as malign as well as benign and essentially ideological, even at their most benign: 'The alleged innate neutrality of museums and exhibitions is the very quality that enables them to become instruments of power as well as instruments of education and experience.' (Karp: 1991: 14)

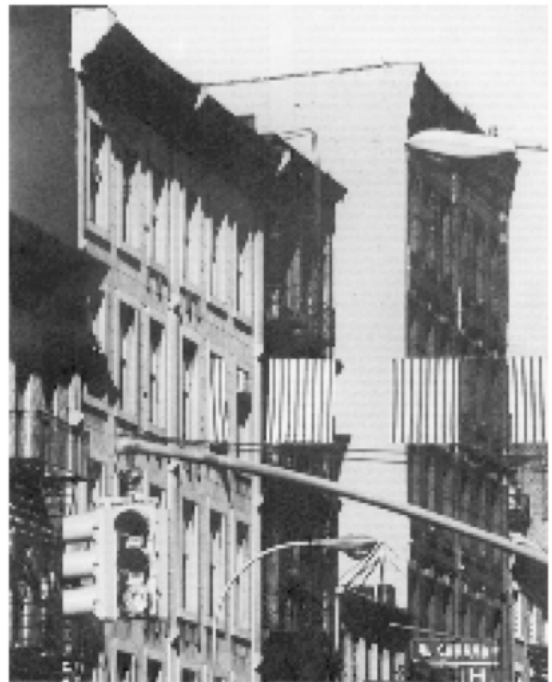
Much of the work now defined by the term 'Institutional Critique' emerged during and from the politics of the 1960s through the work of artists such as Daniel Buren, (b. 1938), Michael Asher, (b. 1943), Hans Haacke, (b. 1936) and Louise Lawler, (b. 1947). Andrea Fraser, credited with first using the term 'Institutional Critique', establishes a context:

From 1969 on, a conception of the "institution of art" begins to emerge that includes not just the museum, nor even only the sites of production, distribution, and reception of art, but the entire field of art as a social universe. In the works of artists associated with institutional critique, it came to encompass all the sites in which art is shown—from museums and galleries to corporate offices and collectors' homes, and even public space when art is installed there. It also includes the sites of the production of art, studio as well as office, and the sites of the production of art discourse: art magazines, catalogues, art columns in the popular press, symposia, and lectures. And it also includes the sites of the production of the producers of art and art discourse: studio-art, art-history and, now, curatorial-studies programs. And finally, as Rosler put it in the title of her seminal 1979 essay, it also includes all the "lookers, buyers, dealers and makers" themselves. (Fraser, 2005: 2)¹²

The subject (or target) of the work varied: direct criticism of the institution's perceived (and often actual) politics and sources of funding (Haacke); the work of other artists within the institution (Buren); The space itself and its hierarchies were the subject of work: Michael Asher, (b. 1943) made subtle interventions – adding a wall, or subtracting elements. He sandblasted the paint from the gallery wall in one work. Later he went on to reposition objects within museum collections. Daniel Buren made work that was at the same time both inside the (privileged) gallery space and outside of this. Fraser neatly identifies what was happening: '... Buren examined how an object or sign

¹² The text referred to by Fraser is: Martha Rosler – Looker, Buyers, Dealers and Makers: Thoughts on Audience. Exposure, spring, 1979)

is transformed as it traverses physical and conceptual boundaries.' Buren's 1973 work 'Within and beyond the frame' could be understood as a direct challenge, a charge at the spatial (and institutional) imperiousness of late modernism, and its systems of documentation and transmission. The work is in nineteen suspended sections of striped, un-stretched, unframed canvas, a mass-produced fabric for awnings. The first sections of the work were installed within the white cube space of the John Webber Gallery in New York, and continued out the window and across the street for 200 feet to a wall-mounted fixing in the manner of bunting. The frame in the title can be understood as both literal and institutional – the institutional gallery frame implicitly asserting value through rarity, uniqueness, authenticity, originality – separating art from the ordinary produced objects of a culture, and declaring the autonomy of the systems of art within that culture.



27. Daniel Buren, *Within and beyond the frame*, 1973. installation at John Weber Gallery, New York.

Buren's gesture does not convince all commentators of its reaching contextual escape velocity. Douglas Crimp, writing in 1976 observes that: 'The nine-and-one-half

banners that extended out of the gallery “beyond the frame” did not, in fact, escape a protective art context, that of SoHo.’ (Crimp, 1976: 76) Aside from an understanding of the culturally rarefied and privileged nature of the centres of major world cities, Crimp’s arch observation points explicitly to what is implicit in much art production and presentation: that often the work of artists requires a degree of protection (or insulation) from that which lies outside the cordons or pale of the professional art world. The white cube space is very much complicit in this, aesthetically and formally, politically and socially. Notwithstanding providing protective situations for such visible extremes as the making of Yves Klein’s ‘Anthropometries’, made using live naked models as vehicles for paint to any celebrated contemporary transgressions of public taste, the sanctioned art space is permissive in outlook and can accommodate and validate any activity as art practice.

It is also useful to consider the idea of Buren’s work affecting as well as being affected by the uncontrollable non-art space of the street, even in SoHo. The work ‘bleeds’ visually into another context which in turn ‘bleeds’ into the work. This kind of acceptance of ‘interference’ or contingency is more than mere pragmatism, although that is a factor. Artists rely on the spatial institutional framing of work to secure the identity (as art) of the work – a kind of membrane to contain and filter – in placing work outside the art-activating space of gallery a new set of questions emerge; questions about the relationship between the art and its non-art context. As we shall see later in this thesis, in the context of sound works these questions are central, as a space may be contained and constrained visually, but seldom aurally.

1.8: The 'white cube'

As mentioned earlier, we owe the term 'white cube' to Brian O'Doherty who in a series of essays entitled 'Inside the White Cube' published in *Artforum* magazine in 1976 developed his ideas of the relationships between artists, their work and the spaces in which they were seen. O'Doherty's interrogation is informed by his approach as a practising artist and as a scholar, and could be read as much as a manual as a critical text. Writing about the essays in 2009, the Danish curator and critic Simon Sheikh says:

His critique can be seen as part and parcel of a general artistic method—that of spatial critique, so prevalent in post-minimalism—and also as a method applied in O'Doherty's own installation work. In this sense, O'Doherty's writings are not art history (though they involve elements thereof), but are rather artist's texts. There is an almost practical aspect to how they instruct an installation artist to deal with space. Indeed, O'Doherty had planned further chapters on the problem of corners and how they interrupt the perfect white walls, as well as a commentary on how to deal with ceilings. O'Doherty's tone is not academic, but humorous and often quite sarcastic (he doesn't shy away from the occasional dig or even dis). As he recasts and rewrites modern art history vis-à-vis various art practices' relationship to the exhibition space, pragmatic answers alternate with theory and references to popular culture. (Sheikh, 2009)¹³

It is in many artists sharing O'Doherty's pragmatism and his alignment on the side of the artist and within practice that may explain something of the persistence of the white cube despite its ideological alignment with modernism; the persuasive, iconic

¹³ Sheikh's essay is published online in *Positively White Cube Revisited*, e-flux journal, no. 3 Feb. 2009 <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/38>

and often ironic quality of O'Doherty's writing allows for the idea of the space he develops within his critique to retain its contingent usefulness through a process of being continually reflected and restaged through the expanded (and expanding) fields of art practice over the last forty years. Sheikh concludes his reflection on O'Doherty's texts by identifying that:

O'Doherty's texts attest to the epistemological shift from the modern to the postmodern era of art and politics. In spite of these changes, however, the text not only marks a beginning, an end, or a part of a history, but is equally relevant today as part of a continuous debate—an ongoing struggle, if you will. After all, most galleries, museums, and alternative spaces still employ the white cube as the favored *modus operandi* for exhibition-making—as the dominant model for the showing of art. Gallery spaces and museums are still white cubes, and their ideology remains one of commodity fetishism and eternal value(s)... (Sheikh, 2009)

Charlotte Klonk contends that the 'white cube' never existed. "...the object of giving museums their uniformly white walls was never to create the enclosed space of a cube. They were meant, rather, to produce a flowing and open space that would be flexible and adaptable, far from being removed from the world, the ideal spectator for such a space would one who would also take an active part in the contemporary world of consumption." (Klonk, 2009: 218) She identifies O'Doherty's 'white cube' "...as a fiction at just the point in the 1960s when many artists (including O'Doherty himself) came to understand their practice as a form of institutional critique. The image of the museum as a sealed container from which the artist could break out offered a powerful target." (Klonk, 2009: 218)

1.9: Post 'white cube', black box, and a location of practice

Since the late 1960s the modernist art space has evolved further in becoming the arena for the development of artists' 'installation' work, the term 'installation' referring ambiguously to both the 'hang' and a type of practice involving the viewer's immersion in the space. In recent years the processes of working through the social, spatial and conceptual constraints of the 'white cube' have emerged within 'Relational Aesthetics' a term developed by the French curator and writer Nicholas Bourriaud (b. 1965) to describe the work of artists such as Pierre Huyge, (b. 1962), Douglas Gordon, (b. 1966), Liam Gillick (b.1964), Vanessa Beecroft, (b. 1969), Angela Bulloch (b.1966) and others. Relational Art encompasses 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space'. (Bourriaud, 2002: 113)

Bourriaud envisions the artwork creating a social environment in which people come together to participate in shared activity. He claims 'the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever scale chosen by the artist.' (Bourriaud, 2002: 13) In Relational Art, the audience is envisaged as a community. Rather than the artwork being an encounter between a viewer and an object, relational art produces intersubjective encounters. Through these encounters, meaning is elaborated *collectively*, rather than in the space of individual consumption. (Bourriaud, 2002 : 17-18). Charlotte Klonk writing in 2009 observes however that " this attempt... has sharp limitations. On one level, the scenarios created..., however striking

and provocative, remain empty gestures...Most visitors pass through the space and watch what is going on in it with detached amusement.” (Klonk, 2009: 220)

These changes have occurred in parallel with – as perhaps the direct collateral consequence of the period of high modernism embodied by Judd *et al* - the primary location of many artists’ practice moving away from the studio and often into the gallery or art space, and this space, initially devised, evolved and refined for the reception of art has now become, in many cases, the site of art’s production, of labour.

Within the last twenty or so years artists’ increasing use of video and film may mean that the white cube is often converted into a black box with an uncomfortably seated audience slipping in and out – but turn the lights on and it’s still a white cube. That artists maintain the endorsement and legitimacy conferred by the white cube is noteworthy – why not show this kind of work in a cinema as a screening, with beginning and end times and more comfort? The answer perhaps lies in the contested neutrality of the white cube, and in its ability to eschew temporal and therefore narrative frameworks to these kinds of works – works whose DNA evolved from sculpture or painting and *not necessarily* cinema. Their ancestry requires a white cube, perhaps even to establish, clarify and reify that ancestry. The white cube space also shifts the expectations of the viewer. It allows an active engagement with media that might otherwise enforce passivity. A video work in a gallery allows for a kind of permeability between the audience and the space. A kind of slippery osmotic commitment on the part of the audience that a cinema space would not allow. It is possible to maintain a distance through this kind of engagement – not necessarily a critical distance, but a kind of sceptical disinterest. A presiding condition in the reception of art is that of the active viewer, moving in space relative to the work. Charlotte Klonk has described this process recently - in terms of the advantages

afforded by the contemporary gallery space - as “visitors encouraged to pick their own way through whatever arguments are put on view...” (Klonk, 2009: 219) Klonk is also usefully critical of much of the practices used in the installation of the newer media and in the way that excluding light from many if these installations diminishes dialogue with other works:

...I think the museum is a uniquely privileged place, at least in the Western world, for the exploration of issues relating to human social interaction, all the more so, because of the size and variety of its constituency. But film, video and DVD projections, at least in the way they are shown at present, do not contribute to this. Instead, the way they are installed continues to reaffirm the idea of the museum as a space apart, a space of private contemplation. (Klonk, 2009: 223)¹⁴

The cinema audience is much more passive – its participants are spectators, distinct and outside the scope of the action on the screen. By contrast, the mobility of the viewer maintains a kind of autonomy that becoming a subject of the cinematic institution subsumes. An exhibition may attract more kudos than an individual screening, the institutional framing and exhibition schedule may confer a greater weight to the work. It is true that artists will install video work with a spatial sensibility, will use and work with a space in its conception and realization, despite the means of realizing the work. This must reflect more than a simple taxonomy of practice. That the means and methods of art production remain loyal (even in a kind of knowing and

¹⁴ In December 2010 Camden Arts Centre had an exhibition which used work that had previously been shown in the gallery over the last thirty years. It was curated by the artist Simon Starling and called: *Never The Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)*. As much as was possible work was installed in the same place as when it had first been shown. In Gallery 1, the principal top-lit space and one which I know well, and in which the qualities of light and space are notable, the light levels were reduced significantly to accommodate one video projection, much to the detriment of a number of works and to the coherence and relationships between works in what was otherwise a carefully selected and installed show.

detached way) to this space suggests that something other than convenience or habit determines its continuing use. It is valued for much more than its simplicity.¹⁵

Within the wider study of museology and exhibition practice there has been a discourse around developments in exhibitions, much of it focussing on the relationship between the institution, its audience and what it shows. Growing out of a panel entitled 'Exhibition Experiments: Technologies and Cultures of Display' the anthropologists Paul Basu and Sharon Macdonald edited a book entitled *Exhibition Experiments* in 2007 which explores a number of experimental and interdisciplinary possibilities for exhibition practice, across the range of activities. These outline (amongst others): experiments in new media at ZKM in Karlsruhe; the narrative (and cinematic) approach of curator Ydessa Hendeles in the 2002 *Partners* exhibition in Munich's *Haus der Kunst*; the prescriptive use of design in contemporary museums; hybridity in realising exhibitions projects; the significant problems of displaying ethnography. In their introduction the authors identify that the principal concern of most of the experiments are issues of complexity and that the experimentation "...has been to reconfigure the way exhibitions work. Rather than making complex realities more vividly simple, patronising audiences and perpetuating illusory securities, the issue has more often been how to engage with complexity, how to create a context that will open up a space for conversation and debate, above all how to enlist audiences as co-experimenters, willing to try for themselves." (Basu & Macdonald, 2007: 16) The

¹⁵ Brian O'Doherty writing in 2007 in a 'sequel' to 'Inside the White Cube', 'Studio and Cube: On the relationship between where art is made and where art is displayed.' concludes with this: 'With the intrusion of installations, video and the rest, the white cube has become increasingly irrelevant; the gallery becomes a *site* - "the place," the dictionary says, "where something is, was, or its be." The liaison of these art media with popular culture has brought into the gallery unruly energies which no longer have an investment in the preservation of the classical white space. Whereas the gallery once transformed what was in it into art (and still occasionally does), with these media the process is reversed: now such media transform the gallery, insistently, on their terms.' (O'Doherty, 2007: 40)

approach in many of their contributors strikes me as one in which any exhibition is treated as a text, which may be part of the understanding of any exhibition, but limits other less prescriptive (and often more complex) understandings. Within the book the approach to the making of exhibitions and experimentation in the field is treated solely as an intellectual process, even within the discussion of design, with the practical relegated to references to constraints in resources, financial and human. Only Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, both artists, acknowledge the significance of process: writing of the artist-led project/space and cultural entrepreneurship they observe that “... the artist or enthusiast is the ideal employee; astonishingly self-motivated, endlessly creative, flexible, enthusiastic, resourceful and, financially, poorly rewarded.” (Cummings & Lewandowska, 2007: 143)

1.10: The white cube as a focus of redevelopment.

Many contemporary spaces are redevelopments of existing buildings; entire new builds are very rare, and despite the perceived autonomy of the white cube, how gallery space is achieved within redevelopment is of great significance.¹⁶ It seems important to maintain the architectural integrity of buildings in this as if it confers an additional and sometimes useful history to a white cube space.¹⁷ There is also a kind of linkage, continuity and ancestry in these things and these ideas and protocols have lineages. The UK has experienced a major programme of gallery development over the last thirty or so years: for example, in 1985 Doris Lockhart-Saatchi together with her

¹⁶ London's White Cube Gallery has always been located in redeveloped and remodelled properties.

¹⁷ In a recent conversation with Jenni Lomax, we both agreed that neither of us liked the Serpentine Gallery spaces, redeveloped in 2000, as we felt they failed to do this.

husband Charles, commissioned Max Gordon, (1931-1990), a British architect who had worked extensively and specialized in art spaces in New York, and was an adviser to MoMA, to remodel a north London paint factory. This created the first Saatchi Gallery, allowing several generations of largely US based artists, including Judd, Richard Serra, b. 1939), Andy Warhol (1928-1987) and Jeff Koons, (b. 1955), selected by Lockhart Saatchi, and shown under the banner of 'The Art of Our Time' to be seen in a coherent and appropriate context that matched the works' scale and ambition for the first time in the UK, a major factor in extending the ambition of a generation of younger British artists of the late 1980s. This astonishingly large and sympathetic space was a revelation to a generation of art professionals of all kinds and its impact on both the art produced and the spaces developed in the following years cannot be understated.

The original Saatchi Gallery must surely have influenced Nicholas Serota at the Whitechapel Gallery, the 1988 redevelopment of which prefigured the ways in which the exhibition spaces under his direction at the Tate Gallery and later Tate Modern would develop. Jenni Lomax, then and still the Director of Camden Arts Centre, worked closely with Nicholas Serota at the Whitechapel. Camden Arts Centre's 2007 remodeling by Tony Fretton, who had previously worked on two Lisson Gallery redevelopments, echoes closely both the 1980s redevelopment of the Whitechapel and the more recent Tate Modern. More recently the Whitechapel Gallery has been expanded in size the Belgian architects Robbrecht and Daem, responsible for *documenta IX* (1992) and several major private European galleries.

This chapter has established the context of the evolved modernist art space that I have chosen to locate my research and practice within; its archaeology and history, its relationship to photography, to ideas of labour and most particularly in the equivocal area between production and reception. That the space is contested and

paradoxically lacks the neutrality its physical qualities would suggest is certain. Its persistence as the primary site of reception within the contemporary visual arts is also noteworthy. Despite a century of extraordinary flux and development in art, the modernist art space maintains the same basic form with which it emerged in the 1920s.

2: Installation and the creative process

This chapter returns to the space in which exhibitions are realized in order to explore the notion of 'installation' from a different angle. We now turn to the actual processes that make exhibitions appear in a gallery: my aim is to describe what happens before artworks are viewed by the public. This is a specialist involvement with objects and space that involves sensibilities that are understood and shared by artists and technicians.

Throughout the discussion I make use of the term 'conditions'. It is important to define what I mean by this word in the context of this thesis. I wish to describe an elusive state or set of states which may only be known, or recognised by a small minority. These conditions involve much more than the end result of an exhibition or artefact, are embedded in process and are part of a specialist understanding or tacit knowledge of art production; they are understood through direct practical experience; they are understood in terms of knowing '*how*' rather than knowing '*that*'. These conditions remain relatively unknown to art's wider audience due to their tacit status, are undocumented, are omitted from discourses around production of meaning, further compounding their elusive qualities, and as a consequence are largely neglected within the historical and theoretical study of art. Despite my own wealth of experience, I find it difficult to pinpoint exactly what they are; they are ineffable, and better served through other non-verbal, extra-textual means.

2.1: Installation and tacit knowledge

Things are not done beautifully. The beauty is an integral part of their being done. (Robert Henri)¹⁸

The American artist Gary Hill (b. 1951), whose work employs complex installations of artist-adapted video equipment has stated that just as there are good performances and bad performances of a piece of music, an installation can be "performed" well or poorly, depending upon the sensitivity and awareness of those responsible for its re-creation.¹⁹ (Real, 2001: 211)

In many cases the 'performers', the gallery technicians and other artists, and the sensibilities they bring to bear upon the processes of exhibition are, as identified by Gary Hill, very important. No statistics are available but most of the technicians I have worked with are recent art school fine art graduates who will spend a relatively short period as technicians²⁰. There are some parallels with the magisterial studio system of previous centuries where less experienced artists will learn a lot from more experienced ones through working with them, however, the gallery technicians are usually employed by the gallery and not the artist, further embedding the analogy of

¹⁸ Henri, R., *The Art Spirit*, (1984 [1923]) p. 53. New York: Basic Books.

¹⁹ As installation of time-based works such as video is employed increasingly, and gets more complex, international standards of installation have been defined by the Media Matters Research Project, a collaboration between, amongst others, MoMA and Tate.

²⁰ My technical crew at the Lisson Gallery included, amongst others, Martin Creed (b. 1968), who went on to win the 2001 Turner Prize. The general pattern is that those that continue as technicians progress into management. There are of course exceptions.

‘performers’ by suggesting something more akin to a house-orchestra or repertory company²¹.

I became a technician by chance. I had recently graduated and happened to be available and contactable at short notice to cover for a friend, the artist Mark Francis (b.1962), who worked for the Lisson Gallery at that time on a casual basis. He was unable to work on a particular day so I covered for him, met a technician from the Institute of Contemporary Arts and within a month I worked as crew for both galleries.

My own experiences of making exhibitions are confined largely to what might be called the ‘blue-chip’ end of the contemporary art world. I worked for many years at the Lisson Gallery, one of very few British contemporary commercial galleries working at the very highest international level. The Lisson Gallery’s own history describes the transition from modernism to post-modernism, linking some of the protagonists of O’Doherty’s writings with the present. The gallery established the careers of artists such as Richard Deacon, (b.1949), Tony Cragg, (b. 1949), Bill Woodrow, (b. 1948) Anish Kapoor (b. 1954) and Richard Wentworth b. 1947) in the late 70s and represents in the U.K. major US figures such as Sol Lewitt (1928-2007) and Robert Mangold (b. 1937). It also worked with Donald Judd during the 1970s. The present Lisson Gallery was designed by the architect Tony Fretton, (b.1945) and both reflects and projects a very particular sensibility about how things should be through a kind of unwritten set of aesthetic and architectural protocols or conventions which it shares with the vast

²¹ In a number of U.K. provincial public galleries, the gallery visitor staff or guards doubled as technical crew. In my experience they had little or no background in the visual arts and were a legacy of centralised civic control of museums and galleries. Their working practices and attitude often caused problems for artists and curators. (personal experience, conversation with Margot Heller, Director, Southampton City Art Gallery, 1993, (since 2001, director of South London Gallery) interview with Chris Osborne, 2010, and others.)

majority of other blue-chip commercial galleries of contemporary art; protocols that are a version of those developed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

I had also worked for substantial periods at both Camden Arts Centre (where I was Gallery Manager in the early 1990s) and the Institute of Contemporary Art in London; spaces which shared the same conventions of installation with the commercial sector but with minor differences as they were publicly-funded spaces with fewer resources and were required to be more inclusive in terms of labeling and informational material.

The formal elements and conventions of most galleries of contemporary art conform (loosely) to the following: spaces are white-walled. Floors are neutral – natural timber, or if painted, grey is usual. Lighting is even and washes the walls. Works are spaced evenly and are given space generally exceeding their own dimensions. Most galleries adopt the MoMA standard 152cm hanging height for the centres of all wall-based work: i.e. a work with a height of 100 cm would be hung with its top at 202 cm whereas a work with a height of 50 cm would be hung at 177 cm. The spaces are defined as much by what is excluded as by what they contain. Services such as heating and electrical sockets are hidden or placed outside the ‘working’ or ‘active’ areas. Often the walls have a small gap at their bottom, called a ‘reveal’ – this has the effect of allowing the walls to optically float free of the floor. (The architect of the present iteration of MoMA, Yoshio Taniguchi, (b. 1937) has extended this reveal around each wall, so all the walls ‘float’ free of structural members. These autonomous walls could be understood as a further evolution of the modernist art space or just a

recapitulation of Mies van der Rohe's 'curtain'.²² (These walls may however, just provide a convenient channel for electronic wires.)

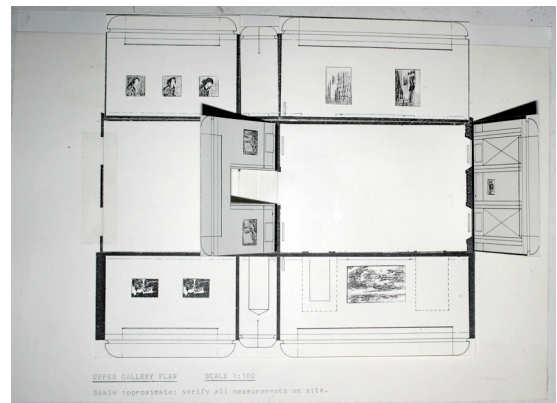
The language and reading of these gallery spaces is such that any deliberate disruption to the established conventions is easily (and usefully) read. This is also true of any unfinished or attenuated processes of installation that will immediately be read as such.

The processes of installation are not fixed, but revolve around a kind of active testing and tuning process. A detailed account of an installation period is contained within appendix I.I of this thesis. Work is tried in different configurations, in different relationships, compared, revised, reworked, remade, augmented, divested. It is an extended process of often-intuitive problem solving in both practical and conceptual terms. As a process it can place a burden on technicians and artists, especially if significant changes or adaptations need to be made with the time available decreasing. However predetermined or well planned an installation may be there is still a tuning process of spacing, lighting, adapting. Work that may have 'worked' in another space requires significant changes to 'work' in another.

Artists adopt many different approaches to the process of installation. In 1989 I was part of the team that installed Gerhard Richter's (b. 1932) series of paintings '18 Oktober 1977' at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Richter made a precise model of the gallery with detailed miniature versions of the paintings established in relation to one another. The day Richter arrived the paintings were placed as determined by the model and after 10 or so minutes' consideration he

²² The architect, Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) used non-structural 'curtain walls' to create autonomous formal elements in much of his architectural work. These were often made of glass. The 1958 Seagram Building in New York is the principal example of this.

suggested a couple of minor sideways adjustments, and we installed the paintings; a little tuning, no testing. On other occasions it is as if an entire artist's studio has been delivered and a myriad of variations are tried – the studio working process is evacuated to the gallery and a period of genuine and often radical experimentation can occur.²³ I have also been involved in disasters in which artists, under pressure and suffering from crises of confidence are unable to arrive at a satisfactory version of their show. This places an even greater burden on the technicians who may have to use their knowledge to rescue something of the situation for the gallery.



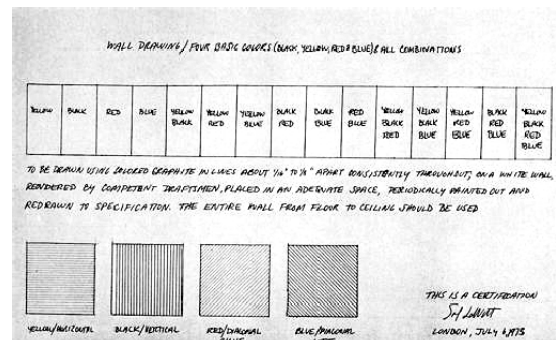
28. Gerhard Richter, model for '18 Oktober 1977' installation at Institute of Contemporary Arts London

A practice that has evolved out of both the legacy of Duchamp's readymade and conceptual art of the 1960s is the artist's specification of a work or an installation. The American artist Sol Lewitt (1928-2007) made wall drawings and other work that were often merely a set of written instructions (which in some cases also constituted the work in legal and exchange terms as a certificate). In Lewitt's case, however, the instructions were usually, and later in his career, exclusively carried out by the artist's studio staff, so a high level of control or oversight was maintained. Other artists have used this method to specify artworks or installations and to exchange and commodify

²³ This can often cause alarm for gallery management not steeped in the tacit knowing of installation.

temporarily installed work that does not exist when not installed, as a wall drawing²⁴.

Donald Judd and Robert Morris have both made work this way, and in the case of Judd have used it to protect their work. He placed an advert in the March 1990 edition of *Art in America* which sought to un-attribute work which he claimed the Italian Panza collection had fabricated without Judd's consent.²⁵



29. Sol Lewitt, instructions for 1975 London wall drawing

Inherent within the processes of installation is a demonstration of the ideas of 'tacit knowing' as a process identified by Michael Polanyi in 1966. For Polanyi tacit knowing is a non-linguistic, non-numerical form of knowledge that is personal, context specific and embedded in individual experiences, ideas, values and emotions. A genuine polymath, with significant work in science, economics and philosophy, Polanyi identified and developed his idea of 'tacit knowing' whilst working within the field of the

²⁴ Bruce Altshuler's essay 'Art by Instruction and the Pre-History of *do-it*' provides a useful overview of art specified and instructed. It was originally published in the catalogue to the 1998 exhibition 'do-it' published by Independent Curators International. An online version is available here: http://www.e-flux.com/projects/do_it/notes/essay/e002_text.html

²⁵ Martha Buskirk in her book 'The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art' outlines the disputes of a number of artists who issued certificates, including Lewitt, Morris and Judd. In research into the Panza Collection archives held at the Getty Museum in California she found evidence that "Judd signed a series of certificates that were remarkably broad in the latitude granted to Panza," that authorized Panza and followers to reconstruct work for a variety of reasons, "as long as instructions and documentation provided by Judd were followed and either he or his estate was notified." This even included the right to make "temporary exhibition copies, as long as the temporary copy was destroyed after the exhibition; and, most astonishingly, the right to recreate the work to save expense and difficulty in transportation as long as the original was then destroyed."

philosophy of science, as a way of describing the fallible and subjective approaches to discovery and knowledge adopted by researchers within the practices of science; what could be called 'hunches'. Writing about the knowledge of approaching discovery he says:

To hold such knowledge is an act deeply committed to the conviction that there is something there to be discovered. It is personal, in the sense of involving the personality of him who holds it, and also in the sense of being, as a rule, solitary; but there is no trace in it of self-indulgence. The discoverer is filled with a compelling sense of responsibility for the pursuit of a hidden truth, which demands his services for revealing it. His act of knowing exercises a personal judgement in relating evidence to an external reality, an aspect of which he is seeking to apprehend. (Polanyi 1967: 24-5)

In the context of this thesis and in approaches to installation I would describe this understanding as the experience of knowing when something is 'right', and this is embedded in ideas and practices that are in themselves fallible and subjective, emerging from the traditions of British art school teaching in which these qualities are often highly valued.

Polanyi's ideas focus on individual process, but it is rare for an installation process to be undertaken solely by an individual; as an artist that individual may define or set the tone for what is being done within the installation but they are, in turn, dependent on others' parallel tacit knowing to enable the installation to proceed in the 'right' way. Chun Wei Choo, Professor in the Faculty of Information at Toronto University, distinguishes between a Polanyian type of individual tacit knowing and a similar phenomenon that is characteristic of groups. Individual tacit knowledge is hard to verbalize as it is expressed through action-based skills, and learned through experiencing and doing. Furthermore, tacit knowing is situated in respect of individuals and their associated artefacts. (Choo, 1998: 111-119) This kind of tacit knowledge can

be learned through apprenticeships, and through "rich modes of discourse that include the use of analogies, metaphors, or models, and through the communal sharing of stories."²⁶ (Choo, 1998: 117) On the other hand, Choo notes that various authors refer to the existence of shared practices and tacit understandings among members of groups that relate to working together, and specific tasks. These observations support the contention that there is a collective or group form (or forms) of knowledge analogous to if not the same as the tacit knowledge of individuals. (Choo 1998: 118-9)

Choo's work suggests that a shared understanding and collective activity exists within tacit knowing. Within exhibition installation process one could call this a shared sensibility and it is a phenomena that I have direct experience of: in 1994, whilst staying at Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Jeff Kopie, one of Judd's principal assistants, knowing something of my background and my experience in handling artists' work, asked me to help him. We moved and re-installed several works together, and despite never having worked together, (and my not being insured) and us only ever having worked on different sides of the Atlantic, we both understood each other's approach to the activity and shared an idea of not only how to do the task but what was required and where margins and tolerances lay. This tacit dialogue went beyond simple mechanical processes, and extended into decisions about where works could be placed; decisions that were, in effect, critical or curatorial, where we were testing as much as tuning. There was a intimacy about this process, a shared understanding of process and desired result.

²⁶ Technicians will share 'war stories' *ad nauseam* if given the opportunity. They often contain useful information and can provide the basis for an artist's reputation among the community of art technicians. Some of my interview with Chris Osborne, Technical Manager at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Appendix 3 gives a flavour of the detail and kind of information transmitted.

Another experience I have observed myself is that of transference where the technician adopts, or tries to align themselves with, the sensibility of the artist, seeking to identify with how they might view something. With artists I knew well I felt that I could do this, and was trusted by these artists with overseeing installation of their work when they were not themselves present. Jeff Kopie, who was Judd's assistant discussed this issue with me in 1994. The artist had died only six months previously and Kopie found himself responsible for supervising installations of planned exhibitions that Judd would have supervised had he survived. He had spent enough time working with Judd to assume this role, and Judd had trusted him in this. He said he felt very close to Judd at these times but found the process emotionally draining.²⁷ (Conversations with Jeff Kopie, Oct. 1994, Marfa, Texas.)

Gerhard Richter's knowledge of his own work and experience of being a participant in what would probably be a much higher number of exhibitions than most artists enabled him to make complex decisions in an unknown space through a process of tacit knowing (this particular body of work has an established sequence, and are all relatively simple paintings so all of the testing and much of the tuning is excluded from this installation process).

²⁷ I spent a long and astonishing night working on the 1988 ICA Meret Oppenheim retrospective with the curator and critic Stuart Morgan (1948-2002) during which Stuart tried to assume the mantle of the artist in a serious attempt to establish how the work should be arranged. His approach was sensual and emotional, entirely unrigorous yet possessing an incisiveness about how things should be. It was an extraordinary experience.



30. Gerhard Richter, 18 Oktober 1977, installation at Museum of Modern Art, New York

2.2: Installation and sequestration

The processes of installation are often restricted or sequestered from public view or access. Technicians, artists and curators consider these processes private and there is a strong sense of violation if outsiders enter uninvited whilst an exhibition is being installed. Depending on the gallery, the site of an installation is usually considered a closed environment, sequestered from the external, with only those who need to be present permitted to be there. The reasons for this are several: there are the obvious issues of health and safety as installations are often much like building sites and there are also issues of security pertaining to valuable works that are, as yet, unsecured. However, what really renders these sites beyond public scrutiny is the fact that they are still sites of primary practice, of testing and tuning '*in camera*'.

When an exhibition involves work that is exceptionally valuable or fragile, such as an exhibition of old master paintings, an installation process known as a 'paper hang' is used. Here, the entire exhibition - the architecture, the interpretive material, display cases and plinths, the lighting, the climate control - is constructed and positioned prior to any objects or paintings being introduced to the exhibition spaces: paintings are

represented by paper stand-ins of similar scale and proportion: sculptures by scaled cardboard boxes. The effect is of an entirely realised exhibition of brown paper rectangles. The objects in the exhibition arrive as close as possible to the opening – this also allows the climate control to be properly regulated and monitored prior to their arrival – and are installed in a secured gallery, in privacy.

A factor in the processes of installation and the conditions of work is that artists are often unable to ‘see’ their work outside of a gallery, as if the gallery provides the final set of circumstances that allow a work to function. I have heard artists say on many occasions they are ‘waiting to see the work in the space’ before making adjustments or revisions. Many artists use the exhibitions of their work as an opportunity to ‘look’ at their work in a way they might otherwise be unable to do. The studio is a place of production and is often cluttered or visually busy, making the critical viewing of work difficult²⁸. The optimized space of the gallery allows an ideal context in which to simply look and ‘see’ the work. This ‘seeing’ would also seem to conform to a binary notion of work being ‘off’, in its pre-public studio condition, and being ‘on’, within the clear sanctioned space of the gallery.

Artists and technicians have all experienced the process of the art space shifting from private to public, from installation as process to installation as product, when an exhibition opens to its audience and the curious sense of violation or loss of intimacy associated with this. As a technician, one has inhabited a space with the same small group for many hours a day over one or two weeks and during this time, the space may

²⁸ Some artists may have a viewing space as part of their studio, one which reproduces gallery conditions.

have been used in an inappropriate way - games of football or cricket, or for late-night drinking.²⁹ (I have slept in the storage areas of major galleries, bedded in bubble-wrap.)

As the opening of an exhibition approaches, there may have been an 'overnighter' performed by the installation team. The last couple of days are punctuated by intimations of what is to come as other members of gallery staff not intimately involved in the process of installation begin to inhabit the space. The media may also be allowed in at this stage, however inconvenient. Finally, as the installation is completed, the last of everything extraneous is cleared and the technicians and often the artist are in another space, the workshop or similar. Nothing more can be done.

The gallery audience will now claim the space as the intimate site of production becomes a public site of reception. For a technician, this is the strangest moment, as you already know what is there, very well, too well, and you have no purpose in being there. There is nothing you can or should do. The insincerity of your gaze in front the work feels palpable. There is often a real sense of loss, of a breaking of ties, of separation.

A second kind of day-to-day intimacy, a familiarity emerges after a show opens. The gallery is checked every day and the work is seen at different times and under varying conditions. The light will change over the course of a day, changing both the work and the space. It is possible to spend long periods looking at work with no distractions. When I worked for the Lisson Gallery I would arrive at the gallery early and using a cordless telephone, make the first batch of my day's calls whilst in the gallery with whatever was in there. I may have spent more time looking at some artists'

²⁹ Chris Osborne, the Technical Manager at BALTIC has confirmed that the uppermost gallery there, which has a public viewing area overlooking it, has still been used for impromptu games of football.

work than they were able to themselves. It is my observation that seeing work in this extended way transforms one's understanding and reading of that work.

2.3: Installation and the impression of effortlessness

As already touched upon in chapter 1, the ambition of fusing an object with the environment in which is displayed is a resonant one for artists, and a central element of exhibition practice. Embedded within this practice and implicit within the process of an exhibition's realisation, is an impression of effortlessness. I think it is important to define my use of 'effortlessness' at this stage. Within the process of making an exhibition installation there is an aspiration that the objects display should appear to have been installed permanently; that they are somehow part of an immutable and unchanging fabric of cultural production. This is done through using materials which can be finished to a high standard, seamlessly integrating temporary structures with existing architectural features, excising or limiting traces of labour and manufacture and simply doing simple things well, such as painting the walls. It is often extended to disguise the means by which something is hung or otherwise installed.³⁰ It is something that technicians take pride in achieving, and will look for and critically evaluate when visiting other galleries. Chris Osborne, the Technical Manager at BALTIC Centre for

³⁰ In 1992 the Tate Gallery installed Richard Serra's work, 'Weight and Measure' in the Duveen Galleries. These were two steel blocks slightly smaller than a family car, but each weighing thirty or forty tonnes, giving them an extraordinary physical presence. Nothing else was in the space. The installation had cost nearly a million pounds and taken several months. I was taken to the basement under the gallery where a forest of props, some controlled by computer, monitored and stabilised the floor. The technicians told war-stories of the hardest show they had ever done. The overall effect of the installation, however, was one of complete effortlessness, almost as if the building had been constructed in the 1890s to contain Serra's work.

Contemporary Art in Gateshead agrees: 'I think it's got to look effortless... I've got to say our job's done best if we're invisible...' (Author interview with Chris Osborne 27th April 2010)

The conceit is that the actual impermanence of temporary exhibition is camouflaged or the viewer distracted through relatively simple means to reflect an idea of permanence and stability, as if the intention is to fix the work and its produced meaning within some kind of enduring matrix; a kind of '*trompe l'oeil*', or sleight of hand. This is aided and abetted by much installation photography that will 'fix' the work within the space in which it is shown. This idea of 'effortlessness' is part of the important process, to an extent fixed through the processes of institutionalisation and standardisation discussed earlier whereby the viewer is able to distinguish what is 'art' and what is not.

In the process of 'opening' an exhibition all clues as to the labour involved, the work to produce the 'work', are exported from the art space; there will always be a storage space, a workshop, a corridor, a wall cavity crammed with the evidence of activity at the end of an installation process, whilst the audience inhabit the show. Hidden is the liminal debris that is essential to the works' existence: empty crates, bits of timber, boxes of mismatched screws, paint rollers, lengths of wire, cases of light fittings and other ever more specific adaptations and improvisations unique to visual art process - e.g.: the length of timber kept, with its purpose written in very large text along its length, to set the height of information labels: 'DO NOT CUT GALLERY LABELS'. This 'stuff' is hidden away, as though its existence in some way undermines or interferes with whatever the work within the gallery does, in the way that showing the mechanics of stage magic might undermine the illusion of that magic.

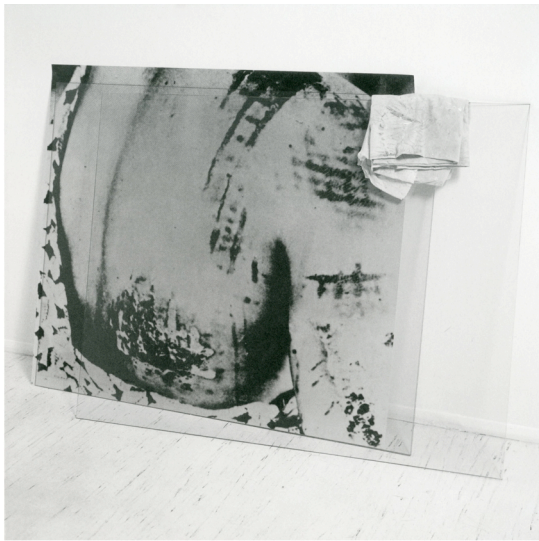
Chris Osborne concurs with this idea of illusion: "...our job's done best if we're invisible, if nobody knows what we've done and nobody knows how we've done it... like the pixie shoemakers, we disappear in the night!" (Author interview with Chris Osborne 27th April 2010)

The evidence of the other labour which is concealed within the environment of effortlessness is Judd's 'time and thought'; the consideration made in how the exhibition is. All traces of the processes of testing and tuning, of shifting and adapting are expunged, as though, again, their presence might compromise the integrity of what is there. A work may bear the traces of its own making, a painting in particular may contain something of the history of its own making, but a finished installation, in general, will always seek to disguise or diminish these traces or histories of production.

The American artist Andrea Fisher (1955-1997) very carefully and acutely subverted the effortlessness of finished installations by including and incorporating incidents and objects from the process within the completed works. In 'Displacement I (Hiroshima)' and 'Displacement IV (Hiroshima)', both 1993³¹, the works appear as if arranged provisionally, leaning, unframed, the elements of glass and photographs unmatched to each other. Fisher includes the cloth used to polish the glass in both works, a clear trace of process and labour, but which also indicates a kind of provisionality as it separates and protects one sheet of glass from another as if in storage. In 'Displacement II (Hiroshima)', 1993, the masking tape used to mark the placement of elements on the wall is retained, behind the final placing of the glass, revealing deliberately something of the working processes of testing and tuning involved in producing the work. Her work teases the modernist space, and what she

³¹ I was responsible for the installation of this show. It was a very difficult show to realise, and was made to exacting standards.

saw as its conceits, but also, paradoxically, requires the space to exist in order to be teased.³²



31./32. Andrea Fisher, (l) Displacement I (Hiroshima), (r) Displacement II (Hiroshima) installation, Camden Arts Centre 1993. Courtesy of the estate of Andrea Fisher.

2.4: Installation technician and artist researcher

My experience is that artists are, if they are involved in any kind of making process, fascinated and highly involved by the relationships between the processes of making, of usage, of how things fit together, of how they feel. I have observed this on innumerable occasions. A hand will extend and explore a surface, a head will be tilted to provide a better angle. Painters will often touch each other's paintings with the back of their knuckles. This is, in my experience, common amongst makers: a colleague's father, a joiner, will always run his hand over wooden surfaces. Does he do this in order to feel the quality? Or to maintain a relationship with the material? Or to reconfirm his being a worker in that material? He will always check how furniture is

³² Andrea Fisher also insisted on taking her own installation photographs.

constructed. Artists will explore the way things ‘are’ – I have noticed that artists will often run their hands over their own work, or continually touch it. This could relate to processes of haptic perception, of recognizing something through touch, or a proprietorial sense towards the work, or simply a sensual relationship to the ‘stuff’ of the work.³³ In ‘The Nature and Art of Workmanship’ the furniture maker David Pye (1914-1993) implies throughout his interesting essay on manual skills that there is an important tactile relationship between maker and crafted product. It is my contention that Pye’s discussion of creative manual work mirrors the immediate subjective, and therefore hidden, experience of the installation technician as they strive to achieve the impression of effortlessness. Because the evidence of labour has to disappear, the haptic engagement with ‘exhibition stuff’ has to be rendered invisible even though it is the process by which the exhibition has been made to look, in Polanyi’s words, ‘right’. Here we can begin to link the concept of tacit knowledge introduced above in my discussion of the theoretical writing of Polanyi with the specialist activities of installation processes.

My research suggests that many artists recognize this sensibility. The artist Richard Wentworth, (b.1947), writing a short essay for a leaflet to accompany the exhibition ‘Touch Me’ at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2004, of which he was the curator, observes:

³³ A note on the usage of ‘stuff’ in this context. In line with theories of tacit knowledge, there is a usage and collective understanding of the word ‘stuff’ that emerges from the art school environment. It (loosely) refers to that which is used in the realisation of work. Whilst not dissociated from its conventional wide usage, it does seem to be used very specifically within this context. It also may be that the understanding of ‘stuff’ in this context varies from art school to art school, and the period of attendance. (At Goldsmiths’ during the 1980s Ian Jeffrey, then head of Art History, was the *de facto* guardian of the Goldsmiths’ construction of the word’s meaning, and introduced it to many generations of students in using it widely in his teaching. It still resonates as a shared sensibility within a relatively small group of artists.)

Finger tips and hands are our primary tools to check out the world, to test whether objects are rough or smooth, sharp or blunt, wet or dry, hot or cold. We learn to do this visually too, so that we can imagine all sorts of material experience way beyond our reach. For certain kinds of sophisticated knowledge we can say that somebody has a 'good eye', or that they have 'taste' - another term that we use figuratively. Eyes are good tools, but the brain is better. We are able to speculate and imagine.

In a BBC radio interview the academic philosopher and mechanic Matthew B. Crawford makes links between touch and understanding, and also the perceived cultural separation between thinking and doing.³⁴ Crawford argues that thinking is separated from doing by being installed within a rule-based process, such as a mechanical assembly line. This has the effect of de-skilling the participants. Labour costs drive this; the modern equivalent is the electronic sweatshop. Crawford himself worked as an electrician and engineer – roles regarded in opposition to 'knowledge work' – but which he argues can be intellectually more challenging and possess an ethical dimension: things present a 'concrete reality that lets you know you've gotten something wrong— you can't interpret your way out of fact.'

The fact that stuff is resistant to will is in opposition to what Crawford describes as the 'fantasy of mastery' that is embedded within the 'narcissism of consumer culture'. Skill requires 'submitting to the intractability of things...' a kind of humility in face of this. He advocates reliance on experience based judgement – 'knowing how' rather than 'knowing that' and bemoans the fact that 'the experience of seeing a direct effect of your actions in the world has become elusive in modern life.'

Crawford goes further in his critique of our shift away from being hands-on in our everyday lives. He argues that design philosophy evolves towards increasingly hiding

³⁴ Crawford's ideas outlined in the interview relate to his book 'The Case for Working with Your Hands', London 2010

the works of gadgets, machines and motors, excluding user servicing - an infantilising process that results in us being less responsible for our environment and being rendered passive through this process. (Interviewed by Andrew Marr, BBC Radio 4, Start the Week, 31st May 2010)

Through this chapter I have sought to outline the complexities of the processes of installation and how they affect and inform those who participate in these. The processes of installation involve two principal and difficult to define elements; tacit knowing and touch. An immersion in and contact with these elements is instrumental in developing an understanding of the condition of art works as they go through the processes of display. This is perforce limited to those involved in these processes.

My background is as a gallery technician and exhibition manager is key to the context of the research undertaken. The exhibition manager is the person on whom the responsibility of realising a temporary exhibition falls; from arranging transport to checking label texts to lighting, a wide range of competencies are required. I worked at the highest level in this role for ten years, mainly within contemporary art where much of the work involved realising first-time installations and projects with living artists. I also have experience of working on a dozen or more historical and museum shows during this period as well as being involved in gallery design and development, and several large public art projects.

This professional experience offered an extraordinary level of contact with works of art and objects, and the spaces within which they are displayed as I spent hours of my working day surrounded by art and objects that I was able to touch and to explore. In being the 'hands-on' member of staff I enjoyed an extended and privileged intimacy that is rare even for museum and gallery professionals and through this

contact I came to 'know', with a kind of domestic familiarity, many works, objects and temporary installations. Through accrued experience, I developed an understanding of the complexities of individual spaces; their acoustic dynamics, the anomalies of floor levels, how light would fall over the course of a day at different times of year and areas of the gallery where work would never quite function. Ultimately this experience afforded me a precise sensibility about the places, processes and manner of exhibition practices and it is this sensibility that both forms the springboard and peculiarly qualifies me for this research.

2.5: Action research and 'messy method'

This practice-led research uses an informal documentary photographic practice to make visible something of the process and conditions of temporary installation and display within near-contemporary and contemporary art practice. This photography is informed by my professional experience within the field of art and exhibition production, design and management, and my background as an assistant to photographers.

The founder of social psychology, Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), coined the term 'action research' in a 1946 paper entitled *Action Research and Minority Problems*. The method is described in the paper as 'a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action'. (Lewin: 1946: 34-46) More recently the management theorist Peter Reason (2000) has written extensively on how action research creates 'practical knowing'. For theorists such as Reason, the person involved in action research cannot be neutral. The personality and

background of the researcher will inform not just the way they gather and interpret information, but also the way they define the material to be researched. This is a method of pursuing an inquiry that is 'participative, grounded in experience, and action-oriented'. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001: xxiv) It is surely this aspect of action research that makes it so applicable to doctoral research by artists. It is the most popular approach amongst practice-led researchers in Fine Art at Northumbria University.

Reason & Torbert (2001) outline the different aspects of human intelligence used in action research employing ideas based on the thinking of the British psychologist John Heron who argues that 'there are at least four main kinds of inquiry outcome, corresponding to the four forms of knowing: experiential, presentational, propositional and practical'. (Heron, 1996: 36-37) These are listed by Reason & Torbert as follows:

- 1) Experiential knowing: the product of a direct encounter with the process of inquiry, a response to the 'presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing'. (Reason & Torbert, 2001: 13).
- 2) Presentational knowing: an explanation of experimental findings using any system of signs: for example, 'graphic, plastic, musical, vocal and verbal art-forms' that 'give form to our experience'. (Reason & Torbert, 2001: 13).
- 3) Propositional knowing: an expansion of existing knowledge generating further theories or formulating new outcomes. A typical example of this form of knowing would be an academic commentary that expands, elaborates or re-interprets an over-familiar body of published knowledge.
- 4) Practical knowing: the knowledge of how to do things. The use of an ability or skill to fulfil the three prior forms of knowing by bringing them to 'fruition in purposive deeds,

and consummates them with its autonomous celebration of excellent accomplishment'. (Reason & Torbert, 2001: 13)

It is important to note that these four aspects of human intelligence form a sequence in which each stage is built, step-by-step, on the achievements of the previous form of knowing. Heron (1996) describes the inter-reliance of the four steps in the following way:

...these kinds of knowing are a systemic whole, a pyramid of upward support in which experiential knowing at the base upholds presentational knowing, which supports propositional or conceptual knowing, which upholds practical knowing, the exercise of skill. (Heron, 1996: 52)

From the beginning of my doctoral project I defined my research as practice-led. When I read Reason & Torbert and Heron I loosely placed my activities as a researcher in the last of the four categories: 'practical knowing' or 'the exercise of skill'. I assumed that my existing specialist experience in the realisation of exhibitions as both an artist and technical specialist would feed into my research and inform my practice.

I explored a methodology, which, as Heron describes, the sequential construction of a pyramid of research activity embraces all four aspects of human intelligence listed above. Reason claims that action research is resolved by, rather than responds to, 'practical knowing' and so my actual research journey could be said to have moved towards my current artistic activities in the following manner:

1) the experiential basis of my thinking transformed my established knowledge of installation into

- 2) presentational formats (photography) that described the disparate ideas associated with temporary installation in the second chapter of this thesis; this description, or documentation led, in turn, to
- 3) the propositional exploration of installation as a binary or proper/improper condition that became the central theme of Chapter 3; as a result I was in a position to exercise a range of supplementary skills in
- 4) the practical research reported in Chapters 4 and 5; by this point the action research process had helped me extend my understanding of ideas and conditions of temporary installation beyond the ingrained knowledge with which I began the project.

However, on reflection, as a model, it neither represents my own experience as a practising professional artist for over twenty years, and as this PhD is an extension of this experience, nor the way that my practice was evolving within this PhD. This practice is defined by a lack of sequentiality, of stepped progression. It is essentially an untidy and stuttering process, often reliant on contingency, intuition, know-how and even chance. Good and useful work often emerges out of a constellation of opportunities and inputs, through luck as much as by design. It is almost an unreflective process, instinctive and impelling, and one which I could not map onto this model.

This has been, and can only have been, a first-person inquiry. Here, according to the Australian informatics theorists Judy McKay and Peter Marshall, an awareness of personal action involves the researcher's distinctive character, an attribute that cannot be replicated by others. (McKay & Marshall, 2001: 46) This individualistic and idiosyncratic aspect of action research is surely a hallmark of all practice-led investigations by artists. I adopted a methodology which had stronger parallels with my experience of making work as an artist.

In developing the practice as well as in realising the link between practice and thesis the process used has strong parallels with the idea of 'double-fitting' identified as a 'messy method' model for the creative discovery process in both the arts and sciences by the education theorist Nigel Mellor (1999) and as described by Baldamus (1976):

the inarticulated trial-and-error technique that occurs when an investigator 'simultaneously manipulates the thing he (sic) wants to explain as well as his explanatory framework'. (Baldamus, 1976: 40)

This process is described by Mellor as one in which:

the data helps build a theory while at the same time the theory helps the researcher see the data in a new light. (Mellor, 2001: 468)

In other words what happens in the practice feeds into the written and theoretical work and the written and theoretical work feeds back into the practice. Whilst working as a technician I also worked as a carpenter and joiner, often working on building restoration projects. The process of fitting a door frame and door is very similar; fitting the frame to the masonry, shaping the frame to the door, and the door to the frame and floor.

Central to my methodology is the exhibition of work from my practice as an artist: it is axiomatic that work which is engaged in a discourse which interrogates the processes of exhibition and the shifting condition of art works within this process needs to be considered critically within this same domain. As work produced within the context of the research is exhibited, the application of critical analysis of the artwork in turn shifts and influences both the research trajectory and the thesis. The thesis remains fluid to support and embody the research and practice it represents.

Whilst working in the capacity of technician and gallery manager I was closely involved in both formal and informal photographic types (outlined below in Chapter 3). At the same time, working as an artist on the margins of the commercial and public/voluntary gallery sector, I had to take installation photographs of my own work. During this period, I also worked as an assistant to Stephen White (b. 1949), one of Britain's leading specialist art photographers, lighting his photographic shoots as well as assisting the artist Hannah Collins (b. 1956) who worked exclusively with large-format cameras, enabling me to develop a strong technical understanding of this type of photography.

To provide a theoretical framework or sounding board for this research and my use of photography I reviewed a body of critical writing and artists' work, much of which considered the museum as its subject. Rosalind Krauss's and Brian O'Doherty's writings helped me to understand the contested condition of the space in which I placed the research, and usefully identified distinct areas of research – allowing for my precise definition of the modernist art space within this research. Louise Lawler's photographs, in particular, identified precise modulations in the status of works in display and provided insight into the ideas of 'Institutional Critique'. I absorbed the influential ideas of Douglas Crimp, in his book 'On the Museum's Ruins' of the museum – in this case the art museum or gallery - as an 'archaeological' site, in Foucauldian terms, and photography residing outside this, excluded from both the museum and art history in Crimp's ideas as it 'points to a world outside itself'. This in itself seemed a useful premise or function for photography in the context of my research, certainly in the initial stages as its exclusion seemed to enhance its documentary function.

3: Installation and photographic documentation

This chapter will initially describe two established types of photography within exhibition practice, and a much more recent development in the field. Firstly we will define the formal installation shot; secondly we will describe the informal photography which occurs around the processes of exhibition practice; lastly we will outline recent developments in the online sharing and organising of images. We will then examine the significant and complicit relationship between installation photography and the reception and transmission of art. The chapter will conclude with a description of the binary definition I established to provide a location for my practice, the shortcomings of this definition and finally my sense of the research reaching a kind of tipping point and the identification of an entirely different and distinct register, and how this leads to the adoption of new means, the use of sound recording.

3.1: Formal photography



33. Tate Britain

As a photographic trope, the ‘installation shot’ is formal in its conception and in its photographic practice. Generally, a medium- or large-format (plate) tripod-mounted

camera is used, under controlled lighting conditions and the image is usually commissioned by the artists' private sector (commercial) gallery. This type of image is used to record a fixed final image of a work that provides the definitive 'installation shot', detailing: the work in its optimum installed condition, showing the space within which it is installed and often giving a clear idea of the works' scale and/or relationship to the context within which it is shown. This type of photography is generally used for the transmission of artists' work to the media, especially the specialist art press, or to smaller end-user groups – museum professionals, collectors for example. Large-format photography is more precise than 35mm or hand-held photography because the cameras and lenses can achieve subtle optical effects and perspective correction unavailable to smaller format cameras. Often the quality of the photography can flatter artists' work and improve the prospects of it selling, or enhance its status through context. The 'installation shot' can 'fix' a work as it is likely to be the definitive image of the work that is continually reproduced initially in magazines and catalogues and subsequently in books. The work of Günther Becker, the official photographer to the first three *documenta* exhibitions in 1955, 1959 and 1964 is a significant figure in the development of the conventions within this type of photography and his work will be examined.

A variation of the installation shot, with the same end-user requirements, is the reference shot. Using a very similar methodology to the installation shot, the reference shot excludes context and is only feasible if the work is flat and/or wall mounted, such as a painting, drawing or print. This type of photograph records a flat image of the work, often with standardised colour and grey-scale calibration patches alongside to aid reproduction. Both the installation and the reference shot are the

formal modes of photography that are likely to be used in any archival or scholarly work, referencing back to a formalist approach to art historical analysis.

In recent years a shift has occurred away from the use of film in plate cameras through the advent of digital technology. The optical apparatus remains largely unchanged, (and in many cases scanned transparency film produces better results than digital backs for large-format cameras) but despite the cost for a digital back to a plate camera (in the region of £10,000) most professional photographers have digitized their process. The huge change that this has brought about in the ease of the image's distribution as a digital image file which can be sent out to instantly and to as many recipients as the sender wishes. Within the commercial gallery sector this has meant that buyers can no longer be so sure of a limited 'first look'. Demand for new work, and prices and values within this sector have 'performed' well recently in relation to the rest of the economic market, particularly during the financial banking crisis of 2007-2009. Whilst this maintenance of value cannot be verifiably ascribed to digital photography, it is interesting to speculate that the 'first look' methodological shift in distribution may be a factor in maintaining a highly competitive art market.

The easy and limitless access to distributed images of artists' work or exhibitions has also created a shift in the modes of reception. Robert W. Sweeny has identified the proliferation of the digital image as 'cloning' in reproductive terms:

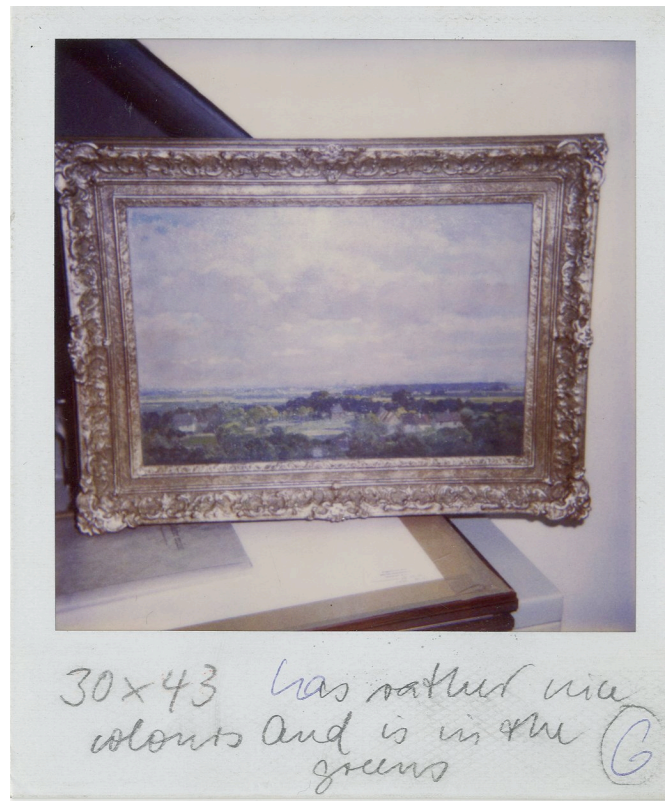
Cloned digital images are different from their mechanically-reproduced counterparts, and must be viewed as such. They physically differ from images produced in traditional media such as drawing, painting, sculpture and photography, often existing without material substructure as ephemeral arrangements of light on a computer screen. They often exist as multiples, easily replicated and manipulated, calling the notion of the original into question. In fact, the operations of the computer challenge many traditional

concepts of originality, creativity, and authorship. The digital image is typically removed from the touch of the artist's hand, separating it from the Western tradition of art representing a direct outgrowth of physical interaction with materials, and therefore a view into the artist's soul. Many see these aspects of digital technology as being closely related to the critique of genius and authorship that is part of postmodernity. (Sweeny, 2005: 2).

Where photography and its mechanical reproduction enabled one to see something of an object or a space without being present, digital photography allows one to see something that may not exist. The potential for an exhibition not to exist but be the subject of documentation is now present. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the *capriccio* was a popular art form. These were essentially architectural fantasies, taking images of existing buildings from different locations and placing these within the same imagined landscape in a painted architectural montage.³⁵ In the same manner a virtual exhibition could be constructed using computer-generated and manipulated images.

³⁵ A number of actual, architectural capriccios have been constructed in contemporary Las Vegas where scaled versions of Venice, Paris and New York simultaneously exist in what Umberto Eco might define as 'the authentic fake' (Travels in Hyperreality, 1990: 44)

3.2: Informal (Official) Photography



34. Polaroid from Gemaldegalerie, Dachau, 1996.

Informal photography is used to gather and distribute either technical information or the condition status of works of art – sometimes both. Formerly, Polaroid or hand-held 35mm cameras were used for this process but is now almost exclusively carried out with digital cameras.

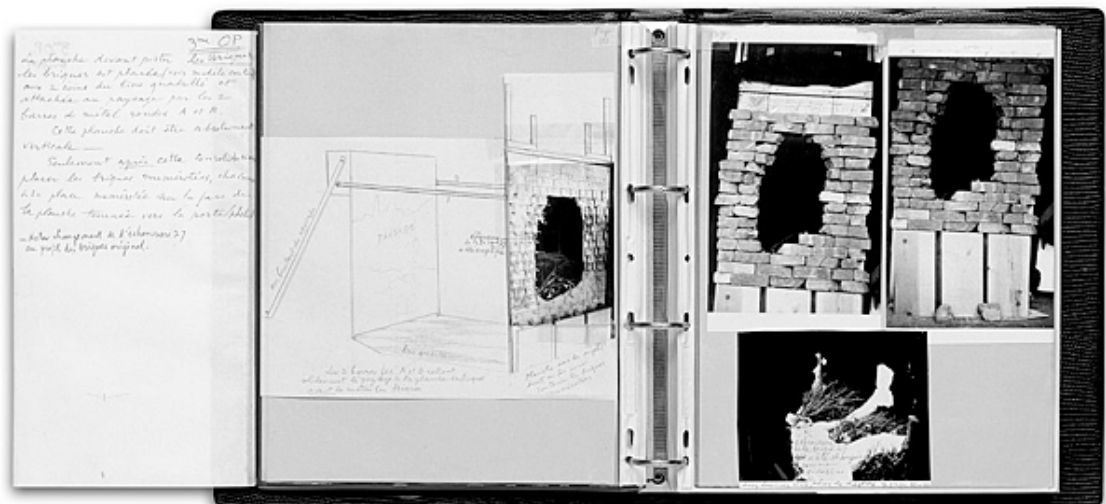
Informal photography fulfils several roles:

- to record the (un)wrapping, (un)packing and (un)crating of work
- to record technical information about the work itself and how it is made
- to record damage or the existing condition of a piece of work
- to provide technical information about the installation of a work

to make technicians aware of any anomalies or problems that need to be addressed/fixed in process

This type of photography, a kind of visual note-taking, allows for images to be attached to the paper archive generated by works of art that may accompany them as they travel, or may go to form their official history or provenance. The technical photograph is/was never intended for a public audience as it is made to convey specific information for a specific professional audience. In this instance, a visual medium is being used to annotate and describe another visual medium. (It can achieve this extra-textually.)

This type of photography is also employed by artists to facilitate the installation of work: Marcel Duchamp produced a photographic 'Manual of Instructions' for *Etant données*, using his own Polaroids to describe the process of its installation. The manual makes no reference to the ideas of the work, or its meaning and is simply a practical document.



35. Marcel Duchamp, *Etant données* Manual of Instructions

Surprisingly photography of work undergoing the process of installation is relatively infrequent, although there are exceptions, but these usually relate to

exceptional projects which in some way extend beyond the usual parameters of installation processes. MoMA NY for example, placed images of Ron Mueck sculptures being moved and installed, but this seemed to be an exercise in arresting images that may be interesting to the media – they were striking, but actually unrevealing of process. MoMA also placed time-lapse film of Richard Serra's sculptures being installed in the museum's garden in 2007 on the YouTube website (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIsBpsyRNfM>). This film reveals to an extent processes of adjustment and tuning of the work, although much of the installation seems pre-determined, as it has to be with such massive and unwieldy work. Artists of the 60s and 70s had an interest in documenting process and often filmed their working activities – Robert Smithson's film 'Spiral Jetty' (1970) being a good example. This serves as both a document to record the process, but also as a kind a supplemental work.



36. Still from Spiral Jetty, Robert Smithson, 1970

The film, made by the artist with the assistance of Virginia Dwan, is poetic and process minded, a "portrait" of his work 'The Spiral Jetty', as it juts into the shallows off the shore of Utah's Great Salt Lake. Smithson reveals the evolution of the Spiral Jetty in voice-over. Sequences filmed in a natural history museum are integrated into the film featuring archaeological and paleontological objects that illustrate themes central to Smithson's work. Smithson stated:

Back in New York, the urban desert, I contacted Bob Fiore and Barbara Jarvis and asked them to help me put my movie together. The movie began as a set of disconnections, a bramble of stabilized fragments taken from things obscure and fluid, ingredients trapped in a succession of frames, a stream of viscosities both still and moving. And the movie editor, bending over such a chaos of "takes" resembles a paleontologist sorting out glimpses of a world not yet together, a land that has yet to come to completion, a span of time unfinished, a spaceless limbo on some spiral reels. Film strips hung from the cutter's rack, bits and pieces of Utah, out-takes overexposed and underexposed, masses of impenetrable material. The sun, the spiral, the salt buried in lengths of footage. Everything about movies and moviemaking is archaic and crude. One is transported by this Archeozoic medium into the earliest known geological eras. The movieola becomes a "time machine" that transforms trucks into dinosaurs.

The film recapitulates the scale of the Spiral Jetty. Disparate elements assume a coherence. Unlikely places and things were stuck between sections of film that show a stretch of dirt road rushing to and from the actual site in Utah. A road that goes forward and backward between things and places that are elsewhere. You might even say that the road is nowhere in particular. The disjunction operating between reality and film drives one into a sense of cosmic rupture.

As I looked at the site, it reverberated out to the horizons only to suggest an immobile cyclone while flickering light made the entire landscape appear a quake. A dormant earthquake spread into the fluttering stillness, into a spinning sensation without movement. This site was a rotary that enclosed itself in an immense roundness. From that gyrating space emerged the possibility of the

Spiral Jetty. No ideas, no concepts, no systems, no structures, no abstractions could hold themselves together in the actuality of that evidence. My dialectics of site and nonsite whirled into an indeterminate state, where solid and liquid lost themselves in each other. It was as if the lake became the edge of the sun, a boiling curve, an explosion rising into a fiery prominence. Matter collapsing into the lake mirrored in the shape of a spiral. No sense wondering about classifications and categories, there were none. (Smithson, 1970: 109-113)



37. Keith Arnatt, *Self-Burial* (Television Interference Project), 1969.
Courtesy of Tate, London, the Estate of Keith Arnatt, and Maureen Paley, London.

There was a point where the documentation of process could be linked to ideas of performance, demonstrated by artists such as Richard Serra, (b.1939) Keith Arnatt, (1930-2008), John Hilliard, (b.1945). The domain of this performance/process is the production of work itself rather than processes of installation. Hans Namuth's famous 1950 and 1951 images and film of Jackson Pollock making a painting mythologised painting (within the artist's studio) as a performative act.

3.3: Informal (unofficial) Photography

An emerging mode of documentary practice is informal and unofficial, reflecting the development of the socio-technical aspects of internet usage and the proliferation of digital photography and online photo-sharing. Social photo-sharing is evident in web presences such as Facebook or Twitter, but is most prominent in sites such as Flickr, Photobucket or Picasa.³⁶ These dedicated photo-sharing sites allow for images to be placed in directories of thematic or subject specific groups (pool assignment) as well as ‘tagged’ with specific search terms. Tagging allows the images to be placed in *ad hoc* groups through search criteria (providing the image has been tagged). The number of images posted can be staggering and in themselves literally impossible to view *in toto*. With relevance to this project, those that are images of galleries and museums will in some way or another document the museum or gallery and its contents from a wide variety of viewpoints. A search on Flickr on the 4th November 2009 using the term ‘Louvre’ returns 437,835 results, of these 324 had been posted in the previous 24 hours. Ingrid Erickson a researcher in digital media from the Social Science Research Center of Stanford University identifies this as

the phenomenon of documentary broadcasting, whereby individuals curate lasting descriptions and commentaries about a location for a public audience... Pool assignment signifies that a photographer’s oeuvre is not simply a random set of images, but a categorized collection put together purposively for public display. (Erickson: 2009: 2)

This clearly identifies a distinct unofficial documentary tendency within the practices of digital photography and image-sharing through the internet. In relation to museums and galleries, this type of photography may well intersect with the formal and

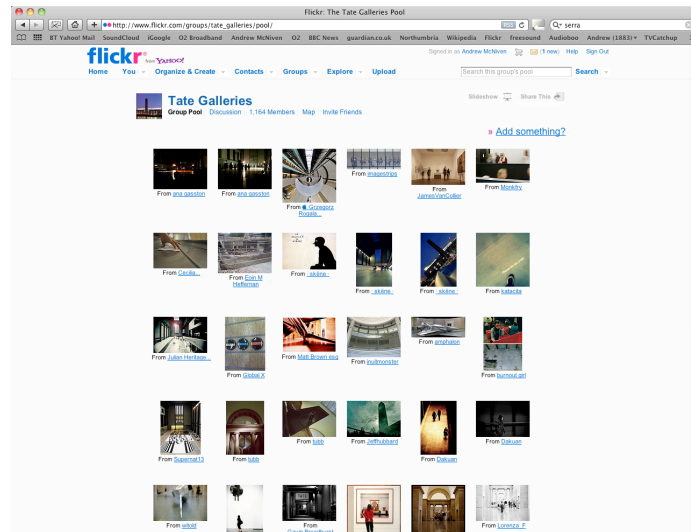
³⁶ www.facebook.com, www.flickr.com, etc

informal modes outlined above, but differs in its (general) independence from the originating institution. Erickson goes on to identify that images posted on Flickr “are often meant to reveal aspects of a ... physical setting that might otherwise be unobserved... When presented together as curated narratives – a form of physical/digital placemaking – documentary broadcasts use Flickr as a virtual public “gallery space” to capture, present and preserve aspects of a place that may last longer than the physical location itself.” (Erickson: 2009: 2)

There are obvious parallels with my own photographic practice that emphasise the unobserved, however, Erickson’s paper is more skewed towards the emergent ‘socio-locative’ practices which: “combine data about a physical location, such as a geotag, with virtual social acts, such as sharing photographs online.” (Erickson: 2009: 2) Erickson does identify the existence of the ‘citizen broadcaster’, able to respond quickly to an event or situation, however, more significantly in terms of this research as well as further research within the field, she identifies a motivation within socio-locative postings which she describes as “the desire to create a lasting documentary of a place.” (Erickson: 2009: 5)

Some of these places, which on Flickr are organized into groups, are museums or galleries. The Tate Modern group on Flickr has 1,004 members and 3,513 posted photographs (8th February 2010). It is certain that before the advent of the new technology many photographs were taken of and in the Tate Galleries; what was absent, however, was the means of distribution in order to create the ability to share, see and recognize other similar photographs or shared concerns. It is intriguing that, potentially these images exist but they are all left isolated from one another. This idea

reveals an aspect of much digital image sharing and organizing: that it is almost entirely recent, the vast majority dating from no earlier than 2005.³⁷



38. www.flickr.com, page of Tate Galleries' group

The images of Tate on Flickr clearly constitute a substantial documentary archive, but one that is entirely detached from 'official' Tate archives. It is a detailed and wide-ranging set of records, undirected, limited and unstable, but one that represents another strand of documentary photography, recording the objects and spaces of galleries and museums. It would also seem to have the potential to reveal to the museums and galleries themselves something of what their visitors' concerns are or where they are directed³⁸. A number of museums and galleries have 'official' presences on Flickr, either as discrete members or as group hosts. These include the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the National Museum of Scotland and Camden Arts Centre in London. These are often used to show less visible parts of the museum's activities,

³⁷ Flickr was launched in February 2004.

³⁸ It should be noted however that photography within many galleries in the UK is limited by copyright laws, so photographers may not be able to record that which interests them most.

such as education workshops or outreach. Many galleries and museums are now also officially supporting sites such as Youtube, facebook and twitter.

Since the advent of this PhD research it is interesting to observe Tate is now (April 2010) using documentary material from Flickr as source material for 'official' documentary activities (although not for scholarly, archival or research activities, as yet):

Hi there

We've just launched a new project on Flickr we thought you might be interested in.

We're making a film to celebrate Tate Modern's 10th birthday and we're hoping to include photos and video from Flickr members. We've created a group where people can submit 10 of their best photos of Tate Modern taken over the last ten years: www.flickr.com/groups/tatemodern10/

The film's director will be selecting some images from the group posted before April 16th 2010 to appear in the film – you can find more information over at the group, as well as detailed group rules that describe how Tate might use submitted photos.

We'd love to see your favourite images of Tate Modern in the group!

Best

Tate

The actual project is restricted to images that 'do not infringe otherwise copyrighted material' and in many ways is at odds with the ethos of Flickr which is based on the sharing of images. It is a kind of appropriation, and suggests a potential secondary and parallel archival model for major institutions. Why not extend the institution's operations to provide for periods of informal documentary activity to be organized, collected and reconfigured by the communities engaged in its production?

Online data sharing is often organized by process of 'folksonomy'. A folksonomy is a system of classification derived from the practice and method of collaboratively creating and managing tags to annotate and categorize content; this practice is also known as collaborative tagging, social classification, social indexing, and social tagging. At its simplest level it may allow those who attend an event and post tagged images of it online to view others' images of the same event through shared tags on a site like Flickr. The social network Twitter uses 'trending' tags to identify increased activity around a particular event or news story. This formed a significant information stream during civil unrest following the Iranian elections in 2009, leading to the Iranian authorities attempting to block Internet access.³⁹ More ambitious projects using a folksonomy as a methodology include the British Library's U.K. Sound Map, using the the AudioBoo sound-sharing website and mobile technologies. This allows participants to contribute sound recordings of locations, geo-tag these, add an image, and their contributions are added to an archival soundscape project mediated by and for inclusion in the British Library.⁴⁰

Museums' and galleries' adoption of distributive and responsive digital media develops in many directions and at great pace. Websites are increasingly comprehensive, wide-ranging and central to museums' and galleries' development and self-representation. Many national collections make images of much of their holdings available online - Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland being examples. Beyond this, The Louvre, for example, has produced an 'app' for the Apple iPhone which allows visitors to carry around reproductions of works in the museums' collections, participate in virtual walk-throughs and read detailed notes. Both Tate and New York's

³⁹ <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/06/2009613172130303995.html>.

⁴⁰ www.twitter.com, www.audioboo.fm, <http://sounds.bl.uk/uksoundmap/index.aspx>

My own contributions to the UK Sound Map are here: <http://audioboo.fm/andrewmcniven>

MoMA (and many other bigger museums and galleries) have invested in digital distribution through Apple's iTunes, providing free downloadable apps for mobile devices, video magazine pieces (TateShots) focussing on individual artists or contexts, and in the case of the Tate, even extended (several hours) conference presentations are available as audio podcasts. An educational arm of iTunes, iTunesU, has provided a platform for museums and galleries to extend the dissemination of research and educational programmes and dovetail with academic institutions. The extension into social media such as Facebook and Twitter is ubiquitous and often seems at odds or in contrast to an institution's previous projection of itself. Inverleith House in Edinburgh, formerly the home of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, and in the last twenty-five years a serious and highly-regarded space doing significant annual shows during the Edinburgh International Festival with major artists including Carl Andre, Ed Ruscha and Lawrence Weiner, has a Facebook feed that is gushing, informal and often very funny, highlighting the weather, visiting ducks and external factors in play on any given day.

Focussing specifically on digital art, ZKM in Karlsruhe in Germany (*Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie*, or Centre for Art and Media) is a museum devoted entirely to digital or interactive art. It has recently embarked on the Digital Art Conservation Project⁴¹, an acknowledgement of the implicit durability of much digital media.

There seems some equivocation around the strategic development of the uses of digital media within the museum and gallery sector. The University of London's Birkbeck College offers a module called 'Museums and Galleries in the Digital Age'⁴²

⁴¹ <http://www.digitalartconservation.org/>

⁴² <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/modules/ARVC/ARVC073S7.html>

which identifies the following as key areas: the Web as 'museum without walls'; the display and presentation of physical and virtual displays; interrelating website content and museum holdings; the display of interactive and new media material; the effect of digital tools such as databases on the organisation and acquisition of collections; locative media and augmented reality as museum tools; the future in terms of parallel physical and digital spaces. However, in a report prepared by Flow Associates for The Collections' Trust 'Mapping the Use of Digital Technologies in the Heritage Sector'⁴³ in 2010 this was one of the key conclusions: "Despite, or because of, an increasingly digital life, people feeling a greater need for real experiences and places, including a recognition of 'nature deficit disorder' and a surge in take-up of cultural festivals and heritage tourism." These understandings map onto other debates around materiality and interpretation, and may indeed be an extension of these.

The debates on the relationship(s) between digital culture and material culture, museums and galleries are reflected in a growth of theoretical writing. The British theorist Ross Parry identifies two distinct narratives in this relationship. One is of an essential incompatibility between the idea of the *computer* and the idea of the *museum* and the other, and more optimistic one, is of an increasing complicity between the *computer* and the *museum* and a widening of horizons in which incompatibilities (of standards as much as approaches) appear resolved (Parry, 2006: xi). The cultural theorists Fiona Cameron and Sarah Mengler identify the use of the term 'hyper-complexity', (introduced by the cultural theorist John Urry in his book of the same name in 2003) to describe the global fluidity of culture producing new levels of interconnectivity and interaction, which by extension, include the object within material

⁴³ http://www.hlf.org.uk/aboutus/howwework/Documents/HLF_digital_review.pdf

culture. (Cameron & Mengler, 2009: 191) They go on to discuss the idea of the 'networked object', using this example:

Iranian protesters angered over the Hollywood film 300 launched in early 2007 and the representation of Persians in the battle of Thermopylae mobilized museum collections through Google to counter negative contemporary representations of their culture and politics and bolster a sense of identity (Jones, 2007). This highlights the fluidity, complexity, contested and political nature of cultural interactions and exchanges around what an object might mean. (Cameron & Mengler, 2009: 192)

The idea of a 'networked object' offering a degree of cultural (and political and social) leverage through its documented and distributed form is intriguing, and, in the context of this Ph.D., tantalising.

Another potentially untapped form of museum and gallery documentation is that derived from existing surveillance technology. The proliferation of CCTV within many public spaces in recent years suggests that museums and galleries will possess an enormous untapped archive of material that records not only the objects and spaces but also something of the temporal processes of visitors using museums and galleries. Analysis of this material would seem to offer a methodology to examine the habits and practices of visitors as well as a way of examining other shifting or unstable conditions within spaces: light, sound, external factors such as where museums and galleries meet the street, the volume of visitors, their behaviour within the spaces and this behaviour as affected by other visitors or groups of visitors – a school group for example.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ There are, of course, legal issues within this relating to privacy and data protection which may preclude its use.



39. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

3.4: Importance of installation photography/documentation

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. (Walter Benjamin)⁴⁵



40. Günther Becker, *documenta* I, 1955

⁴⁵ From *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935): 2

In 1955 the first '*documenta*' exhibition was held as part of the *Bundesgartenschau* (Federal Horticultural Show) then held in the German town of Kassel. It was the idea of the artist, teacher and curator Arnold Bode (1900 –1977) and was significant in its broad overview of the international art of its time and in showing artists' work carefully in large purpose-designed spaces, initially the badly damaged *Fridericianum*, and quickly colonising other spaces, both internal and external. (It pioneered site-specific practices.) Part of its initial impetus and purpose was to re-introduce international modernism to Germany in the post-war years after its excision during the Nazi years. Initially held every four years (now held every five, the next being in 2012) with a different curatorial team each time, it is generally regarded as perhaps the most important recurring event in the contemporary visual arts.

An innovation within the early *documenta* was the commissioning of a photographer to record fully the exhibition and its realisation. Gunther Becker was the official photographer to *documentas* I-IV and his work in photographing the installations in the main exhibition site, the *Fridericianum*, did much to establish the symbiotic relationship between the modernist art space and its documentation through photography. Becker's images form the template for most contemporary installation photography. As I stated above, Grasskamp, has gone so far as to say (with particular reference to Becker's images) that one cannot understand the exhibition of art without installation shots.⁴⁶

Becker's images crucially establish and record something of the relationship between the individual discrete works and the space within which they are viewed. Much previous photography of art privileged the artwork over context, excluding or neutralising anything external to the object itself. The conventions of photographing and

⁴⁶ See footnote 3 above

reproducing paintings were to crop the image at the point where it met the frame, and sculpture was photographed against a neutral background, often without clear horizontal or vertical planes, using angled light to model the forms. These conventions allow for an enhanced view of the detail of an image or object through its isolation, and were ideal when used within the practices of comparative art history but extracted or omitted other valuable knowledge – most significantly an object's scale, for example, or its relationship to another member of a sequence, or its relationship to the space in which it is placed, the conditions under which it is viewed in quotidian terms and often fail to represent *how*, (in the broadest sense) something is achieved. These attenuated and diminished images parallel ideas within the practices of art history and critical theory, notably those of Heinrich Wölfflin and those of the Second Vienna School, both of which placed their emphasis on the analysis of style and form, and suggests that there may also be a link between fashions or methodologies within art history and critical theory and modes of documentation. For example, many of the images in André Malraux's (1901-1976) *La Musée Imaginaire*, a photographic collection of many works of art drawn from many sources, the first volume of which appeared in 1947 are of this excluding style⁴⁷. A similar contemporary project using the same material might typically use fully contextual imagery and place work clearly within its cultural context to allow analysis to include this.

In contrast, Becker's images are inclusive and expansive, photographing the entire situation from floor to ceiling, ground to sky, using available light and show the

⁴⁷ Published in the UK as 'Voices of Silence'. It is interesting to note that the first two images in the book are, loosely, installation images, setting the scene for a notional museum. They are a photograph of a room in the Museo Correr in Venice, and a reproduction of Teniers' The Gallery of the Archduke Leopold at Brussels. Malraux wrote: "By means of photography a "museum without walls" is coming into being, and... it will carry infinitely farther the revelation of the world of art, limited perforce, which the "real" museums offer us within their walls..." (Malraux, 1947: 16)

mechanism and process of display, the apparatus of exhibition. It is by including the spatial situation that we can identify what chimes with what we know and understand as an 'installation shot'. In his images of *documenta* II he shows the spaces being constructed prior to work being installed. In images of *documentas* II and III he shows the exhibition 'happening', (on), being viewed, engaged with, populated by its audience. We see the wires from which pictures are hung, the works' juxtapositions not just with each other but with exhibition furniture, information, architecture, horticulture. Even though the images are black and white, we get a sense of the play of light, the atmosphere within the exhibition spaces and this relationship to the work. (Much contemporary installation photography excludes natural or ambient light through the use of tungsten sensitive film, which reproduces colour well, but requires tungsten and only tungsten as a light source, washing everything evenly. Digital installation photography often uses the same even wash of light, to mimic analogue photography, despite not being subject to the same constraints.) Above all, Becker's images describe something of the experience of the exhibition and how the audience encountered the work. If not a conventional narrative in itself, it narrates or makes visible some of the phenomenological aspects of the exhibition; the warmth of the days, the strong light reflected through interior and exterior spaces, the period detail in clothes, hairstyles and furniture, the theatricality of some of the artificial lighting at night, the smell of the grass, of the paint, of timber being cut, the sounds of labour, of visitors passing through, of hot summer days. The photographs are a vivid and durable document of these significant shows and make a strong case for their inclusive and expansive methodology despite a sense that they idealise their subject to an extent. (They are perhaps more durable than some of the work they record.) It should be noted that Becker was commissioned not by the artists or their dealers, but by *documenta* and and this

informs his viewpoint. He is photographing *documenta* and what the exhibition represents and not individuated works; the event and its resonances rather than discrete events within this; the combination and blending of works and spaces.



41.-46. Günther Becker (clockwise from top left) *documenta*s: III, III, II, III, I, II.

It is really only when the context of art became more significant in the production of meaning in art, in the 1960s, that installation photography really acknowledged the art space fully, and expands and includes in a way similar to Becker's

images, (even then not always, depending upon whom is paying). Brian O'Doherty places this point firmly, at the hands of Frank Stella, whose shaped canvases of the early 1960s 'powerfully activated the wall'. (O'Doherty, 1976: 29)

He goes on to suggest that, in Stella's 1960 show at Leo Castelli, New York that "...the hanging there was as revolutionary as the paintings; since the hanging was part of the esthetic, it evolved simultaneously with the pictures. The breaking of the rectangle [in Stella's work] formally confirmed the wall's autonomy, altering for good the concept of the gallery space. Some of the mystique of the picture plane (one of the three major forces that altered the gallery space) had been transferred to the context of art." (O'Doherty, 1976: 29)

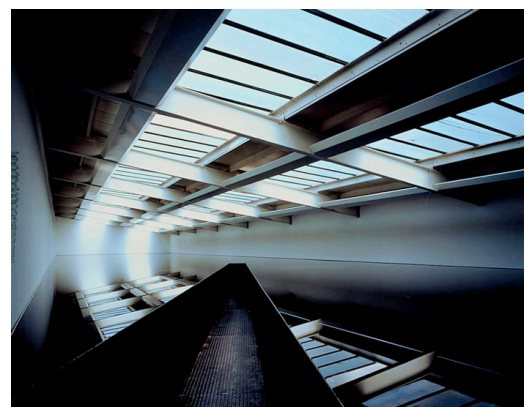
O'Doherty makes a link between the demands of an art style, colour-field painting, "...the most imperial of modes in its demand for *lebensraum*." (O'Doherty, 1976: 34) and its requirement of sufficient space to allow each work to function autonomously and the manner by which it is photographed, and suggests the idea that this type of installation shot is: "...one of the teleological endpoints of the modern tradition. There is something splendidly luxurious about the way the pictures and gallery reside in a context that is fully sanctioned socially." (O'Doherty, 1976: 34)⁴⁸ O'Doherty leaves commentary on the installation shot hanging here, concentrating on the space itself and artists' responses to this. (He goes on to align the installation shot as being inhabited by his over-privileged protagonist, the 'Eye', as distinct from the less discerning, unfiltered 'Spectator') O'Doherty's text, whilst remaining, arguably, the key text about art's relationship with the space in which it is placed, could be regarded as remiss in its failure to acknowledge the significant role of photography in relation to

⁴⁸ Mary Anne Staniszewski identifies the installation photograph as 'modernist', as there are 'no subjects in the texts'. She is referring to the convention of omitting people from installation photographs. (Staniszewski: 1998: xxiii)

the transitions of this space from modernism to post-modernism – a number of factors – the financial institutionalization of art, the embedded establishment of the white cube as an enclosure (and guarantor) of art, shifting art practices and an increased appetite for the mediation of art all placed a much greater weight on the documentation and transmission of artists' work through installation photography. However, O'Doherty has identified the crucial link between the work, the space which contains it and its preferred documentary medium. Inasmuch as the white cube provides a good photograph, the photograph enhances the power of the white cube. It turns everything into a picture. Bryony Fer, writing in 2001 states:

“It is almost impossible to imagine a history of installation [art] without photography to document it. The photograph can turn everything into a picture, and whatever history we give installation is represented through a photographic narrative.” (Fer, 2001: 79)

Although identifying the significant relationship between what has come to be called 'Installation Art' and photography, it is also true of much work that has been produced since the 1950s, work that is inevitably in a complicit relationship with the modernist art space. The photograph shifts the experience of immersion, of being within a space, of being involved to that of being an external viewer, a looker, a voyeur, a non-participant.



47. Richard Wilson, 20:50, 1987. Installation at Saatchi Gallery

As a picture the installation, any installation becomes transmittable, it becomes detached from the time and place in which it occurred. It becomes available to external scrutiny. It shifts from the anecdotal to the verifiable. In May 1957 Yves Klein (1928-1962) emptied all the furniture from a room in Collette Allendy's gallery in Paris, a precursory act to work which would later become 'The Void'. This work achieves mythological status through *not* being photographed – it is still somehow attached to its time and place through not being recorded photographically. (That it may never have happened at all is also a tantalising possibility.) In the transfer of his final work, *Étant donnés* to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Marcel Duchamp made strict provision for it not to be photographed within a given period – from the time-span one can surmise it was to ensure that he would probably be dead. The agreement between the Cassandra Foundation (Duchamp's intermediary) and the Museum stipulates that "... For a period of fifteen years from this date, [the] Museum will not permit any copy of or reproduction of *Étant donnés* to be made, by photography or otherwise, excepting only pictures of the door behind which said object of art is being installed." (Klein, 1994: appendix)

The exclusion of an installation or an event from documentary processes can be seen as an attempt to guarantee a certain kind of value and approach to the work itself – although the non-documentation of Klein's early incipient void may just be bad luck. Duchamp would be keenly aware of the interest generated by a surprising last work that he had spent twenty or so years creating during a period when he claimed to have given up art. One can speculate that his proscription of photographic reproduction of *Étant donnés*, excepting its exterior element, the door with two peepholes, full of promise, was highly calculating, and fully aware of the fact that now, in its extensive reproduction, its mystique diminishes. Or at least the mystery of what lay

behind the door.⁴⁹ It can, of course, be seen as a continuation of Duchamp's eschewing of what he called 'retinal art' and an ongoing speculation about the relationship between the viewer and art.



48. Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés*, 1946-1966. Installation view, Philadelphia Museum of Art

What can be further speculated, however, is whether Duchamp's co-option of the non-photographic process (and non-transmission of pictures of the work) could be considered part of the work. The work has detailed instructions – and such precision, often employed to misdirect, was Duchamp's stock-in-trade. The lack of photographs certainly enhanced the enigmatic nature of the work, and also served to direct its reception – when it was first installed queues formed to see in person what was impossible to see otherwise – and ensured that it was reported. For many, the only way they could access Duchamp's work was through anecdote – a regression into an unreliable oral culture. Duchamp always used the potentialities of photographic documentation and transmission well – the notoriety and '*succès de scandale*' of his

⁴⁹ The mysterious denouement of *Étant donnés* fascinated me as a student, and I made a specific trip to Philadelphia to see the work during the 1980s. Its unavailability made it even more desirable to see, and to be able to know that I knew what was behind the door. I only knew it from anecdotal description.

early 'readymades' was due in part to their reproduction in the mass media – and in the instance of *État donné*s he uses, with equal effectiveness, its inversion.

Daniel Buren's 1973 work "Within and beyond the frame", discussed earlier, extends its challenge to orthodoxies discussed in Chapter 2 in defying the systems of documentation and transmission as it extends and escapes beyond any photographic frame – it is as if Buren is seeking to step away from the usefulness of photography at a point when, simultaneously, many artists are starting to realize that it can be adopted as a powerful and legitimate practice. The work defies being photographed in its entirety, becoming reliant in the process upon a textual description to confirm and document what is happening. In this case it differs from Duchamp's repudiation of documentary photography, as description was and is an essential component of conceptual practice – it is as if the preferred documentary medium of conceptual art is the descriptive text. Photography merely fails to represent the full extent – physical or theoretical – of the work it tries to record. That much photographic practice of the following decades owes something to conceptual artists' use of photography to record their activities owes as much to this paradox and the strategies for negotiating this. (A kind of multipurpose document, often Xeroxed, could be regarded as the singular artefact of this period, a kind of manual to discover and even re-enact artworks.)

It is interesting to note that the use of immersive 'virtual reality' technologies, such as Apple's Quicktime VR, which can render spaces relatively successfully, is still limited. Some museums use these to provide 'virtual tours' on their websites. In most cases they are used as 'edutainment', as they are enjoyable but as a specific documentary medium their use seems limited as they need to sacrifice quality to maintain practicable file sizes. Spatial distortion is a factor, although large format photography also does this. (The Vatican's online VR Sistine Chapel boggles both visually

and sonically.) Another factor is that there is as yet no agreed standard for these so they will often not work within differing operating systems. (Some museums and galleries, notably MoMA, have started to produce ‘virtual exhibitions’ online, which are essentially high quality slide shows of works within exhibitions, with no sense of context or scale.)⁵⁰

3.5: On/Off: a binary definition

To establish something of how the ideas of effortlessness, of public and private, of completion, of readiness could be understood within the terms of this research I adopted the framework of a binary idea of work being ‘on’ or ‘off’ as a way that work and spaces could be understood as operating as they went from not being on display to being on display. The binary definition was an attempt to identify a kind of point which clearly marked the transition from one condition to another. It was further refined to suggest something of the divergence between types of conditions within my own mind and the terms ‘proper’ and ‘improper’ were adopted, with full awareness of their implications – the terms derive from the experiences of intimacy outlined earlier. I experimented with ‘on’ and ‘off’, but these were too directly binary, and fail to represent the degree of slippage – a function of such a subjective concept – required within this context. ‘Proper’ and ‘improper’ suggest an extended consciousness of the conditions, a set of collectively agreed protocols – a degree of consensus is required

⁵⁰ www.vatican.va/various/cappelle/sistina_vr/index.html
www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2007/jeffwall/
www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2008/bookshelf/

for these to exist. As we enter the transitory stage of this thesis, the shift from image to sound in my research, this was how I defined these terms:

An outline of a binary condition within arc of existence from 'off' to 'on'

A description of this proposition [proper/improper] in relation to artists' work

the artist is satisfied that the work is sufficiently as he/she would wish

the artist is satisfied that the work can function autonomously beyond the studio

the work is viewable by an audience without the artist's explanation

the work has been installed correctly according to instruction

the work is maintained - in its best possible condition

the work is in a condition when a permanent documentary photograph is possible

the work is in satisfactory relationship (formal, cultural, historical) to other works, as decided by the artist/curator

A description of this proposition in relation to the art space or context

the art space is maintained - distractions are minimised

unnecessary additions or inessential material are excluded

the space is of a standard

the correct orientation is available - signage, labels, information sheets, etc.

the lighting is appropriate, correctly adjusted and turned on

other works within space are in a 'proper' condition

the space seeks to bear no visible history of other work

This framework reflected my own approach and attitude as an artist, a technician and a researcher towards exhibition space and the processes of realizing an

exhibition. It was an attempt to define where, or codify what the tacit knowing of artists and technicians resides or is understood. The understanding of the ‘proper’ condition is relatively straightforward; the ‘improper’, as it progressed through degrees of readiness or preparation is less straightforward. I defined the condition ‘proper’ as a condition in which an exhibition, and the work or objects it contained, was ready for its audience, complete in all respects, all details considered.⁵¹

The ‘improper’ is more complex. It refers to a nebulous set of conditions: undoneness, half-doneness, pre-decisiveness, incompleteness, provisionality, un-sweptness, partialness – a set of conditions known and understood by those for whom they are significant and which may be or seem trivial to those for whom they are not. There are, of course, obvious points along the ‘improper’ spectrum: a sculpture in a crate is ‘improper’, and so is an un-hung framed work. It is when these points start to become less obviously apparent to the untrained or inexperienced eye that they acquire a kind of strangeness. They reflect the degree of finish that the artists, technicians, exhibition designers or curators require. In some cases the ‘improper’ could be the lack of a second touching-in of white paint on a picture’s mirror plate – two thin coats are better than one thick one. It could be a blown bulb noticed on a daily walk-round. (How many galleries and museums check their exhibitions daily?) A mark on the floor created by a rubber sole. The degree of finish can vary between galleries, but not by much. My conversation with Chris Osborne, and other technicians and gallery managers confirms this, as much to distinguish the interior institutional art space from the external site-specific space and the practical (and theoretical) approaches to these. They also provide a kind of unofficial international standard, that an artist can travel to almost anywhere in the world for an exhibition and be sure that basic elements will be

⁵¹ On the day before a show is opened a ‘snagging list’ is prepared, that is everything remaining to be done. The show would be deemed ready when everything on the list was completed.

consistent – spaces vary enormously in quality, in ambience, in how work might fit within them, but the basic understanding that a well-lit white wall and neutral floor will be available is almost universal. There is a sense that work could be made about the minor variations which occur within this framework; German walls are often harder than British ones; French galleries often have parquet; in New York the ceiling heights are generally greater, etc., etc. They also encompass another understanding however, which is a knowledge of what something is supposed to be like, and by definition, what it is not supposed to be like, something which may not be apparent to those not involved in the processes of its production⁵², especially where new or previously unseen work is involved.

3.6: Limitations of binary definition and expansion of subject

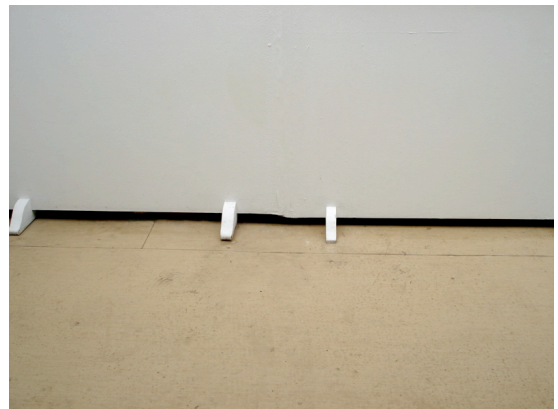
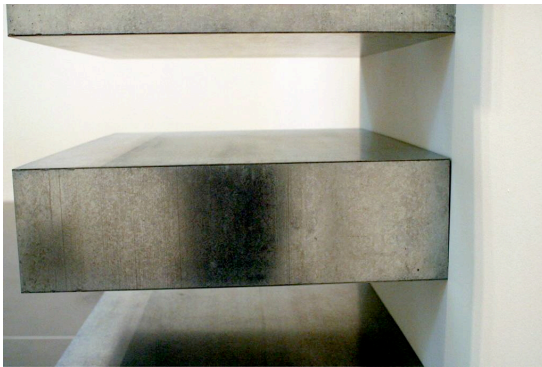
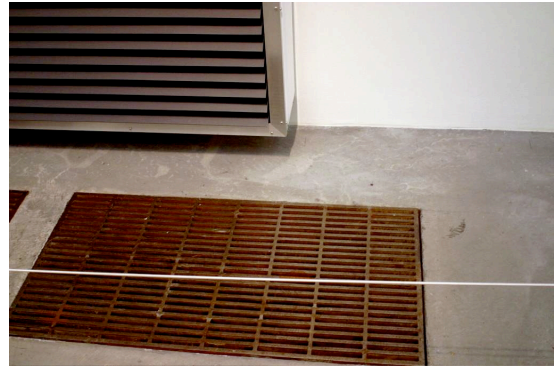
Through this process of definition my photographic practice shifted to being one that sought out (rather than merely observed) the breaches implicit in the proper/improper definition. I took photographs within gallery storage facilities and within the galleries themselves. In some cases I photographed a work's existence on display and in storage.

⁵² In 1988 I worked on the ICA show of Peter Halley's (b.1953) paintings – paintings which because of their weight and a complicated fixing process took a substantial period to hang and re-hang. After several protracted and minor ($\pm 5\text{mm}$) height adjustments over several hours into the evening Halley needed to leave. We agreed to re-hang again a few millimetres higher. We didn't. He came in the next day and was told the paintings had been raised and happily and gratefully okayed the height, the same height he had rejected the evening before. The work was (perhaps) both proper and improper. Proper for the artist, but improper for the technicians, cognisant of its not being installed precisely as requested. Incidents of this kind were rare in my experience. It was a tired crew and was no reflection on Halley, who was a delight to work with.



49./50. Philip King, *Genghis Khan*, 1963, on display, in storage. Courtesy of Tate.

I found myself 'stalking' galleries seeking what I perceived to be anomalies or deviations from that which I had defined as 'proper' within a context of completed installations. Using these definitions I looked for traces of production within places of display, I concentrated on flaws or omissions, I scrutinised works and spaces for the tiniest infringements of protocols I had established in my own mind through the 'proper/improper' model. Contacts familiar with this developing practice even started to send me pictures they had taken.



51.-56. Clockwise from top left: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Tate Modern, Tate Modern, Gracefield Arts Centre, Hereford Museum and Gallery, Tate Modern. (All images Andrew McNiven)

I began to expand the scope of the places within which I took photographs. I became interested in an extended range of modes of display and approaches to

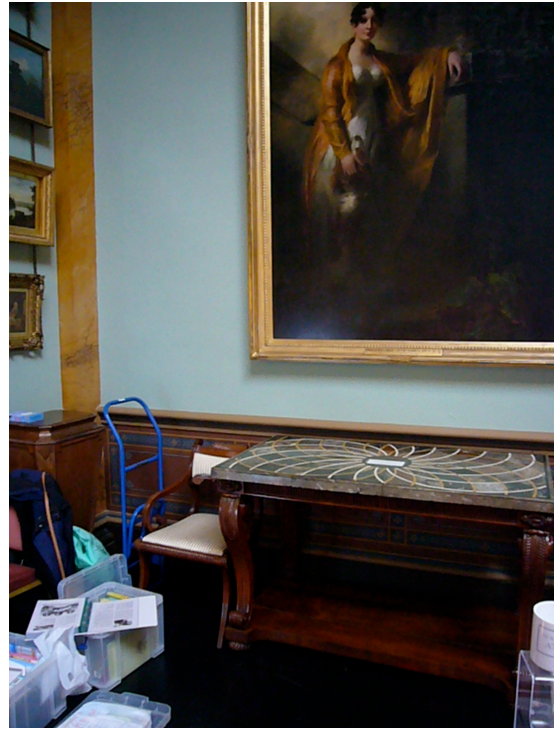
producing knowledge within these contexts, and by extension, what was displayed – large public museums such as the British Museum, small specialised museums – Sir John Soane's Museum for example, historical houses, public art projects – places in which there were deviations from my protocols or which indeed possessed their *own* protocols, suggesting a different range of requirement from the objects or artworks exhibited. I found it hard to shake off some of the vestigial values inculcated by my contemporary art background and these persisted – my distaste for spotlighting for example, a common practice within museum display to isolate, and dramatise objects, particularly those of perceived value.



57./58. Sir John Soane's Museum



59. (l) National Museum of Scotland



60. (r) Paxton House

The divergence between my own (probably rarefied) values and those of a wider material culture and its modes of museum display suggested that that my idea of ‘proper’ and ‘improper’, whilst providing a useful framework within which to place research, and tenuously plausible within the restricted confines of the practices of contemporary art, the modernist art space and its descendants, was inadequate in describing the shifting conditions of objects and artworks whilst they underwent the process of display in more general terms. Many practices use the term ‘spectrum’ to indicate a wide range within a specific condition – this usage could be co-opted to describe the condition of artworks and objects on and off display. In nearly all cases it was possible to place my photographs within the ranges of a spectrum of formal display. This taxonomy of display was not my purpose.



61. (l) La Nuovo Arca, Bari.



6.2. (r) National Museum of Scotland

Throughout the research I had been placing the original photographic material produced within a kind of informal archive and using this in my own practice in work made under the extended title of 'Monkey Business', that is to refer directly to Judd's assertion discussed earlier and reflecting something of the works' intent. This took the form of 'playing' with variations of the photographic image: framed, unframed, arranged, rearranged, grouped, ungrouped. I began to reproduce the photographs at the scale and format of a 5" x 4" large format transparency, historically the commonest format for installation photography and its transmission, in order to clarify the relationship between my practice with established modes of documentation. The scale of these images requires close attention, requiring the viewer to move relatively close to these in order to understand the detail within the image. In addition to this, at a later stage, I converted images digitally into *ersatz* Polaroids, which could be handed around, transmitted manually, swapped, placed informally,



63./64. Polaroids: (l) Tate Store, (r) Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

The first opportunity to show work emerging from the research in a formal exhibition setting was after approximately two years from the starting point. I devised a way of showing the work that both acknowledged the existing documentary process – by adopting the 5” x 4” format described above – and the language and practice of exhibition by placing the photographs in Perspex mounts that resembled those used by museums to display labels, (descriptive rather than interpretive labels). The work was installed in a way that mimicked and reflected precise tropes within exhibition practice – standard height, generous spacing, washed lighting etc. It became clear, however, that the work also needed to transgress or disrupt the display protocols with which it engaged to be able to explore these critically. This was achieved by placing some work at the foot of the gallery walls, beyond the usual parameters of ‘useable’ space, despite its scale and relative fragility. It was a deliberately ‘bad’ piece of installation and provoked the work into a more critically engaged position. That this, the ‘bad’ installation troubled me, was troubling in itself as it suggested to me that I was over-

committed to and stuck within a highly prescriptive methodology of installation. This required that I consider closely what was happening. The rigorously placed and structurally enforced installation was given an air of provisionality - a sense of something in transition, caught at a point between being something and nothing, a disruption of the idea of the 'effortless' installation, with its impression of permanence and through this was genuinely engaging with the ideas of 'proper' and 'improper'. This meant that viewers had to determine whether something was ending or beginning, was 'dressed' or 'undressed'. This explicit reading, however open-ended, and abetted by the language of the protocols of a white cube space made the intention of the work clear, but lacked any extended transmission of the fugitive conditions of process in the way I hoped.



65./66. Andrew McNiven:

(l) Tate Modern: Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, (The Large Glass)*, 1915-23, reconstruction by Richard Hamilton 1965-6, lower panel remade 1985. 2008 digital photographic print, perspex, laquered MDF, 10 x 15 cm.

(r) Tate Store: Allen Jones, *Wet Seal*, 1966. 2008 digital photographic print, perspex, laquered MDF, 10 x 15 cm.



67./68. Andrew McNiven: Installation at Northumbria University, 2008, showing initial (l) and second (r) versions of installation.

At this point in this research project it became clear that the research and practice was simply failing to demonstrate or embody the elusive or fugitive conditions of exhibition that I hoped it would. If anything the research and practice had become burdensome and stayed inchoate and the process of seeking out the problematic or 'stalking' gallery space skewed the intentions of the practice. It felt as if I was pushing up a steeper and steeper slope.

3.7: Other ambient conditions of spaces

My earlier experiences working within galleries involved spending protracted periods in spaces which were designed for relatively brief periods of occupation and short visits. I had become aware during this period of other ambient factors in the functioning of a space, the temporal and the non-visual, such as the passage of daylight

over a day and the material odour of particular spaces and objects within these, the presence of gallery staff and other visitors.

Beyond light, (and dark) the most overwhelming ambient factor which affected the functioning of a space was the acoustic environment. Most art spaces are highly acoustically reflective environments, with hard surfaces and little or no acoustic baffling or absorbing material. My first real awareness of this was in the Lisson Gallery, which had a concrete floor and plastered marine plywood walls. The problematic acoustic dynamics of the space operated in opposition to the space's specialised and aesthetised condition and diminished its strengths as a space for visual art. In several localised areas it was impossible to hold a conversation with someone five feet away as the echoes drowned all out. The gallery would amplify and distort external sounds, such as diesel engines outside or footsteps from the floors above and render any conversation impossible. The net effect was to destroy any intimacy the space might have possessed and this I feel sure affected the viewers' relationship to the work. My sense and experience was that it also affected how artists approached working with the space as much as the formal architecture did, avoiding certain areas where the acoustics were particularly poor.⁵³ It made practical day-to-day working within the gallery difficult, especially if any power tools were used, and there was an oppressiveness that affected those present in the gallery spaces. It was rare to find employees of the gallery 'hanging-out' in the gallery space, and many could have only viewed the exhibitions during private views, when the presence of larger numbers of visitors changed the acoustic environment. Even the occasions such as working through the night which usually enforced a kind of intimacy between those working were affected, and none of the camaraderie or sense of shared experience that these

⁵³ There was one corner in particular that resisted artists' work. When my own work was shown at the Lisson Gallery in 1993 it occupied this corner.

generated were present. When the gallery was being redeveloped by the architect Tony Fretton in 1990 efforts were made to use much more acoustically absorbent materials in the newer spaces and a concrete fondue mixed with latex was used in the final build. This mitigated some of the inherent acoustic problems.

This awareness of the acoustic environment of spaces had stayed with me and had informed my own work within exhibition or gallery design. I had differed with the architects Feary and Heron, who were involved in the first abortive redevelopment of Camden Arts Centre in 1992 as I felt they had failed to even consider this as a factor in designs for the new gallery.⁵⁴

The processes of spending extended periods of time photographing within spaces more recently during this research had brought me back to being sensible to the ambient sound of spaces. On one particular occasion I was particularly struck by the sound of a (necessary) dehumidifier next to a Mondrian painting in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh. I used my mobile phone to record the sound and listened back to this on an iPod. In this process of separation or dislocation I became immediately struck by the relationship between an object, a space and the acoustic environment which they share.

I acquired a Minidisc recorder and started to make audio recordings of the galleries in which I was taking photographs in what I initially saw as a secondary or supplementary practice, one in which to capture the ambience or 'feel' of a space. I was at that stage unclear about my purposes in recording sound and my motivation was to simply accumulate material. As this developed there was the intention of using this audio material to better describe the areas of display and to 'illustrate' or extend the

⁵⁴ A 2009 recording made in Gallery III of Camden Arts Centre reveals the exceptional acoustic conditions of this space, lying close to a major road junction on one of London's principal trunk routes.

possibilities of my photographs. I had already started to post photographs online and did the same with the sound recordings. Through this narrowcasting process I became aware of the communities active in 'field-recording' and 'sound-sharing' which the advent of digital technology had allowed to develop and expand. I became involved in the 'freesound' project, a web-based project in which sound-recordists produced and shared recordings, or made recordings on behalf of each other.⁵⁵ All recordings on 'freesound' are placed there on the basis that they are free from copyright restrictions. Not only was I able to listen easily to other places and spaces, at other times and in other contexts but I was able to assemble knowledge of techniques and technical processes to produce better quality recordings.

I found that my interest in the potential of sound as a creative medium, beyond its documentary qualities was informing and directing my research activities. The very qualities it possessed as a documentary medium; its indexical veracity and ability to capture unrestricted a situation in its entirety provided a useful basis for a creative practice in which the condition of an object or situation was the subject. The idea of veracity is highly questionable as the location of a recording can only be asserted. I like the idea that you have to take my word that this is what I say it is. I like the fact that you can choose to believe me, or not. The viewer is made complicit in the production of the work.

It is impossible to introduce the idea of indexicality without reference to the work of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) the American philosopher, logician,

⁵⁵ Field recording is any recording produced outside a recording studio. It involves the direct recording of ambient and natural sounds, and is also known as phonography, a term devised to link it to photography. It can also refer to the recording of musicians in the absence of a studio, but the former meaning is the one used throughout this thesis.

mathematician and scientist. Peirce elaborated three central trichotomies of sign. The first depends on whether the sign itself is a quality or an actual thing or a habit (*tone, token, type*). The second (*icon, index, symbol*) depends on the kind of reference to the denoted object. The third depends on the kind of reference which the sign will be interpreted as making. The second trichotomy is the best known and most relevant here:

Icon, also called a *likeness* or *semblance*: a sign that is linked to its represented object by some shared quality (which may vary from physical appearances, common actions, distinct sounds, etc.). An example of this would be a gender sign on a lavatory door. This is iconic because it is meant to signify a man or woman through a simplified visual representation. An icon is not dependent on an actual connection to its object or on a habit of interpretation.

Index: a sign that is linked to its object by an actual connection or real relation (irrespectively of interpretation). A simple example is an "Exit" sign which has an arrow pointing towards the exit. Smoke billowing from a house is an index for a fire inside.

Symbol: A symbol represents its denoted object by virtue of an interpretive habit or rule that is independent of any shared physical quality or proximity. A word such as "horse" is an example of a symbol which, additionally, is specific to a particular language. Most spoken language (with the exception of instances of onomatopoeia like 'hiccup' and 'roar') is symbolic because it is arbitrary in those senses. For example, the English word "window" has no relation to any actual physical window.

Discussion around Peirce in relation to the visual art is usually placed in the discourses around photography and the second wave of post-modern writing and

thinking; writers such as Richard Shiff, Molly Nesbit, Steve Edwards, Blake Stimson. As the British critical theorist John Roberts notes:

A reinvigoration of the debate on the relations between the index, the icon, and the symbol in representation—out of renewed interest in Charles Sanders Peirce—became crucial, therefore, to this second wave of literature, in order to let some fresh air into what had become an unproductive stand off between the artists and documenters. In what ways does the relationship between indexicality, iconicity, and the symbolic in the photograph produce meaning? What kind of pictures are indexes? How do indexes produce photographs as pictures? This, in turn, has generated something of a post-second-wave stage, in which the position you adopt on this question is largely where you place the significance of the index in the index/icon/symbol mix: is it subordinate to the process of picturing, or is it beneath it, or athwart it, in some way, as a kind of recalcitrant presence? (Roberts, 2008: 464)

Whilst not mapping directly or interpreting comfortably practices involving sound, Peirce's analysis and Roberts' recently identified and applied tensions between artists and documenters create a set of factors that need acknowledgement within the context of sound. Giovanna Chesler, an American filmmaker and theorist reworks Peirce's second trichotomy with reference to sound, which although based within film theory seeks to provide a useful framework for a semiotics of sound:

Iconic signs (sound recordings)

indexical signs (the dynamic relationship between the sound and the object that made it)

symbolic signs (words/language used to describe an object or sound.)
(Chesler, 2007: 1)

The placing of sound recordings exclusively within Peirce's definition of 'icon' seems unlikely – if anything it straddles both the 'icon' and the 'index' – or certainly

field recording does. However the issue of a recording's veracity creeps in to any discussion in relation to indexicality and sound. The sound recording of an object and its situation does start to encroach on ideas of veracity. It is unverifiable. The recordist can assert that it is where it claims to be, and certain auditory clues might serve to confirm or preclude this. The silent object, however, is still unverifiable, its presence requiring that the listener simply accept or reject the word of the recordist or editor. This is in contrast to photography where the indexical is in the direct visual relationship between the object photographed and the resulting image.

Two factors significant in my shift toward sound were a previous collaborative project and the films of the American film director and artist David Lynch (b.1946).

In 2002 I was commissioned by the City of Witten in the Ruhr region of Germany to produce a permanent site-specific work. The work is an architectural intervention in a room at the top of the tallest building in the city and is intended to be viewed from both inside and out and near and far. I raised the interior floor in the room so it was level with the windowsills and I also lit the room very brightly. The work examines notions of the civic, the citizen, cinema and spectacle, and also functions as a kind of apparatus in that it provides a context and the material for other activities, other artists' work or interventions that inform and expand the possibilities of the piece and ideas of informal and formal collaboration. I made a number of collaborations at the time, and the space is still regularly used as a site for other artists' work. In 2002 I was supervising a post-graduate student at Edinburgh College of Art, Arabella Harvey, who was experimenting with sound, and particularly the use of contact microphones, which can capture an extraordinary range of the sounds. She would then process these electronically, shifting pitch to almost subsonic levels. I invited her to make something for the space in Witten. She worked site-specifically and absorbing the cinematic aspect

of my part of the collaboration, through discussion she devised a kind of menacing sub-industrial humming and throbbing. The effect on the space was extraordinary and the way it pushed the potential of the work was genuinely transformative. A kind of narrative was projected into the space, which was charged in an entirely different way and a changed set of readings resulted.



69. Andrew McNiven: Witten Apparatus, 2002

David Lynch makes films in which the use of sound is central. He uses sound extensively to create a texture which may or may not reflect the film's narrative. The menacing industrial sounds in 'Eraserhead' (1977), the medical equipment, insects and sprinklers in 'Blue Velvet' (1987). A 2001 BBC radio documentary had stuck with me. This followed Lynch's sound editors, the late Alan Splet and his wife Ann Kroeber as they recorded voraciously almost every conceivable sound around them which they would then layer to create the textured sound used in the films. Their enthusiasm for and advocacy of sound, together with what was a seemingly boundless curiosity about every aspect of the sonic and resonant environment and its potential was something I found infectious. That, despite the sound serving the moving images in the film, they were able to think of sound as something in itself, in almost material terms. Their approach too was material, using contact microphones which pick up internal resonant sound as well as external reflected sound. Literally: the sound of things.

Within this chapter we have detailed a shift in the research, one which is not simply a change in means. The transition from the visual to the aural is a sea-change, requiring, in terms of practice, a reconfiguring of frameworks, and in theoretical terms the assimilation of an entirely different register of thinking, a new body of ideas, and an area and set of activities which are unfamiliar and unrehearsed to the researcher. In simple terms, the move away from the visual, or visual primacy is a cause of anxiety. The aesthetics of sound were wholly unfamiliar. My experience both as an artist and as a technician has allowed me a confidence in working spatially and visually; to work well with factors that are relatively controllable and containable. In comparison, sound feels expansive, slippery and undisciplined.

4: Installation and audio recording

‘The eyes see what the ears hear’ (David Lynch) ⁵⁶

I re-recorded the space in Edinburgh with the Mondrian described above at a much higher quality and used this in the first work I exhibited using sound. This was shown at the same time as and in an adjacent space to the photographic works described in section 3.6. The work was an ambient recording of a room in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art containing early, defining modernist works including the painting by Piet Mondrian. The sound of a dehumidifier was prominent in the recording, as was the distant sound of gallery staff talking and laughing. The work was installed in such a way so that the means of reproduction were invisible and the sound level was, as it were, ‘life-size’ – neither over amplified nor exaggerated, but at a kind of ‘natural’ sound level. ⁵⁷

In describing the work, or identifying it for my own purposes I thought of it as the ‘hum of modernism’, as if there was a relationship between the uncompromising modernism of the room and the Mondrian and the machine sounds of the dehumidifier. The work was unheeded, entirely ‘overlooked’ by viewers until their attention was drawn to its existence. Even then, its sonic veracity, a function of its indexicality made it indistinguishable from its surroundings; ‘invisible’ both visually and culturally. This type of sound is described as ‘acousmatic’, that is a sound dissociated

⁵⁶ The Air is on Fire, *Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain*, 2007

⁵⁷ Had I chosen to represent visually the room at a 1:1 scale it would have been overwhelming. At a comparable sonic scale it was almost unnoticeable.

from its means of production⁵⁸. This sound shared a set of sounds which could have been present in the site it was exhibited, but were not.

What was 'visible' or evident, however, were the sounds of the museum.⁵⁹ This was the ambient space 'experienced' by the viewer of the Mondrian, and in which the Mondrian exists. It was therefore also the sonic environment that the Mondrian was almost continually placed within and could be said to 'experience' itself.

The existing and continuous sonic environment in which works are placed is pertinent to ideas of their condition and the processes of display. That this condition is one that they could be said to 'experience' is questionable, but provides a plausible way of elucidating something of the temporal and spatial processes of display, something beyond, or at least distinct from the instant 'moment-in-time' of photography, and the suspended dynamics of the installation photograph.

⁵⁸ The French film sound theorist Michel Chion has identified that in cinema, the acousmatic situation can arise in two different ways: the source of a sound is seen first and is then "acousmatized", or the sound is initially acousmatic with the source being revealed subsequently. The first allows immediate association of a sound with a specific image. Chion calls this *visualised* sound. It becomes an "embodied" sound, "identified with an image, demythologized, classified". In the second instance the sound source remains hidden for a period, to heighten tension, and is only later revealed, often used in mystery and suspense based cinema; this has the effect of "de-acousmatizing" the initially hidden source of the sound (Chion 1994, 72). Chion states that "the opposition between visualised and acousmatic provides a basis for the fundamental audiovisual notion of offscreen space" (Chion 1994, 73).

⁵⁹ Whilst we were both taking part in an exhibition at Berlin's Akademie der Kunst in 2000 and hanging around waiting for technicians I helped the artist Hans Dirk Hötzel fill the empty space with a line of all the gallery's de-humidifying units, twenty or so, which were connected up and left roaring for a few minutes making it almost impossible to remain within the space. This was just a way of passing time, kind of artist's prank, an simultaneous invisible drying up and filling of the space. The curators were keen to retain this, but it was impractical and possibly dangerous.

4.1: 'Showing' sound: some new practical work

There is a highly contingent element to much art practice and as the ideas of objects 'experiencing' spaces started to emerge an opportunity relating to sound but unrelated to these ideas developed. Through my membership of Freesound and my having made online requests for ambient recordings of gallery spaces I made contact with an American sound engineer Mark Tauman. He had been the soundman for a documentary film about Pop Art, and the work of Warhol and Lichtenstein in particular, made in the early 1970s which had been shot in the galleries of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As soundman he had recorded what are known as 'atmos' (atmosphere) tracks which are simply the ambient sounds of the location being filmed. These can be used in the final editing process to provide a simple and authentic textured background ambient 'atmosphere' for any sequence of film. Their use is ubiquitous within most film and television production. He offered these recordings to me to use within this project.

That they were made in the Museum of Modern Art and so were a direct connection with the paradigmatic central context of my research was critical, but I was struck as much by the point in time when the recordings were made as where they were made. They were made at the very end of the late-modernist period and the beginnings of the post-modern period. They were made in a part of the museum that was demolished in 1979 so only existed in documentary form. The recordings were in poor shape due to tape deterioration, and sections had been lost, so only relatively

short fragments remained. Their persistence reminded me of a Roman perfume bottle, sealed for hundreds of years, an extraordinary tangible trace of something long gone. They were in some respects like a palimpsest, remnants after the original text had been scraped away and erased.

From my experience with the first exhibited sound work I had decided to take a risk with the work and exclude photographic material entirely. This decision was made to test what I could do with a space and the sound of another space. I was fully aware that the sound of the space used to 'show' the sound of the other space would also be present and I wanted to get a sense of how these conditions might work with each other. Would the viewer understand what they were experiencing? Would they distinguish one set of sound from another?

In January 2009 I had a one-person exhibition at Gallery North PS in Newcastle. I used, unprocessed and looped, the ambient recordings made in the Museum of Modern Art in 1972. A simple label was the only element placed conventionally within space, a replica of those used in MoMA and described precisely what was 'in' the space. The means of reproduction, four speakers, was visible, placed high up on the gallery walls.



70./71. Andrew McNiven: *Monkey Business No. 29*, 2009. Installation at Gallery North PS.

Photographs by Ikuko Tsuchiya

Fig. 1. Label:

Andrew McNiven

Born 1963, Edinburgh, UK.

Monkey Business No. 29 (Warhol, Lichtenstein, 1972). 2009
CD player, amplifier, four speakers, looped ambient sound recording
made in Room 15 of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street,
New York, (demolished 1979) June 17th 1972. Works by Andy Warhol:
Untitled (Electric Chairs). 1971. Roy Lichtenstein: *Brushstrokes*. 1967.
(Sound recording courtesy of Mark Tauman, Chicago) Gallery
information label, perspex.

The final installation allowed the viewer an immediate and intimate access to this far-removed, temporally and spatially, historically privileged space, what Mary Staniszewski has described as the 'ideological apparatus' (Staniszewski, 1998: 70) used to smooth and legitimate the initial passage of modernism into the United States at the very end of that period of modernism during the 1970s.

The work invited the viewer to examine closely the space which art inhabits in the process of being on display whilst at the same time experiencing directly something of its archaeology and history. I was particularly interested in the work being understood in the same terms as an installation photograph, a transmittable representation of a particular set of cultural circumstances - the installation of particular works at a particular site at a particular time - and in examining ideas and methods around the documentation, reproduction and transmission of the conditions of temporary exhibitions. Through the recapitulation of something of the phenomenological experience of looking at art my intention was to allow some kind of temporal and geographical dislocation of the viewer to occur.

In parallel with the exhibition I produced a version of the work in a compact disc edition, the reverse of the crystal case of the CD doubling as a label and therefore allowing a version of the work to be reproduced anywhere with a CD player. The edition tests whether the work could be portable conceptually and plays with the relationship between the content of the sound and the context within which it is placed, displacing the audio and removing the indexical (gallery) space within which it is placed.

The work and the associated edition raised a set of issues and further questions, particularly in relation to photography. These were explored in a seminar with staff and students in February 2009. I have summarised the ideas and issues that emerged from this:

What happens when something is dislocated, temporally and geographically?
Duration: sound is immediate and one cannot rescan back or review, which provides for an engagement that differs significantly from the visual and photographic. Despite

this the work still, and paradoxically, invites the act of looking. As a work with duration the work unfolds unequivocally, in contrast to the perceived immediacy of the visual. That the visual has been culturally privileged within the western tradition may be related to the primacy of sight within cultural practice, particularly within modernism. The visual, however, can only 'unfold' through a kind of extended contact and engagement.

If one engages with the idea of the work standing in for an installation photograph, is the work a representation of the room itself? Is it a representation of a generic gallery? Is it 1972 or 2009? The particular is important as semiotic structure – precision of time & place is significant in simultaneously reading the room where the other space is present. This makes a direct link to photography and to the French theorist Roland Barthes' (1915-1980) ideas outlined in his book on photography, *Camera Lucida* - that of the *punctum* and the way an image can pierce with the engagement with some other time and place⁶⁰.

Listening is a different cognitive process from looking and we must therefore construct meaning in a different way. It is not just a matter of sensing differently. The scale of the work is highly significant - the idea of the work being in some way 'life-size', one that in a sense that matches the original acoustically and spatially differs greatly from a more amplified or constrained volume. The work embodied the idea of space as landscape, a field, and not as narrative and involved sharing space as well as being complicit with the previous audience, heard within the work, so the contemporary audience are doing the same as those that they listen to within the reproduced recording. In material terms *what* was recorded and reproduced was very

⁶⁰ Whilst useful as a mechanism in discussions around photography, Barthes' emphasis on informal 'snapshot' photography in *Camera Lucida* lead me to maintain a distance from the idea of the *punctum*.

important – a photograph of and from 1972 would generate a particular response and engagement, and even gain value through the simple virtue of hanging around. In this context the sounds could be considered as ‘elite ambience’, not just any old tape, and taps into how we both value and ascribe potential to things that last a long time.

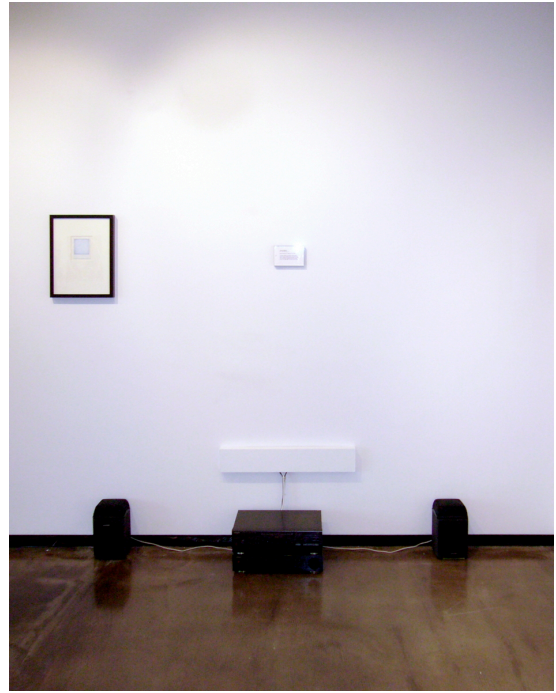
The discussion raised some things that surprised me, or rather ideas I had implicitly followed in my practice and in the way that I presented the show, and the use of scale in particular. It had never occurred to me to reproduce sound at anything other than a natural or ‘life-size’ scale.

In July of 2009 I participated in a group exhibition of work made by practice-led PhD students at Northumbria University. The work made for this show was tighter in its conception and focus, and I had to consider the context of its being shown within a larger group show, how it might be affected by the work around it and how it, in turn, might affect that work. There was again an element of testing, of trying something out. A recording was made by placing a microphone inside the front right-hand drawer of Sigmund Freud’s desk, situated in the study of his former home, Maresfield Gardens in Hampstead, now the Freud Museum. (This was also the room in which he died.) The intention with this work was to demonstrate the sonic conditions experienced by the desk as it exists within the museum, and place it firmly within material culture - this is the same desk that resonated to the sound of Freud’s voice and those of his patients, the motions of his pen as he wrote and other sounds associated with him, intimate and public, perhaps even those of his death. The present sound environment in which it exists includes a particularly jarring telephone ringing tone, the commentary of visitors, the sound of an audio-visual display elsewhere within the museum – looping Glück’s ‘Eurydice’ – and the sounds associated with people moving around a space of that kind - the creak of parquet, for example. (Prior to the

museum opening that morning Anna Freud's study was filled with the Ken Bruce show on Radio 2 as the painters were working in there.)

The sonic effect of placing the microphone within the desk was significant; it picked up sound resonated through the object as well as the air so the sounds were muffled, distorted, sometimes elusive. The atmosphere created could be described as dark, somewhat mysterious, suggesting something hidden or concealed. It also contains narrative elements, with distinct events occurring throughout the recording, which lasts about nineteen minutes. The work fore-fronted the object; Freud's desk, resonant as one of the primary sites of his activity (the other, his couch, *the couch*, was a few feet away) and through an auditory scopophilic process, the work 'showed' or perhaps better, demonstrated, what the object 'experienced', the room and its activity. Through this process the object's own agency, its active presence, emerged, despite the object itself being physically absent. It could be considered analogous to the 'point-of-view' shot in cinema, an analogy assisted by the diegetic⁶¹ nature of the sound.

⁶¹ Sound, especially in film, is termed *diegetic* if it is part of the narrative sphere of the film. For instance, if a character in the film is playing a piano the resulting sound is "diegetic." If, on the other hand, music plays in the background but cannot be heard by the film's characters, it is termed *extra-diegetic*.



72. Andrew McNiven: Monkey Business No. 32, (Sigmund Freud), 2009. Installation at Gallery North.

4.2: An outline of sound theory

‘What I did with any idea that came to me was to turn it around and try to see it with another set of senses.’ (Marcel Duchamp)⁶²

In starting to use what was to me a new medium in my practice mid-way through a practice-led doctoral project the location and understanding of that practice within already existing contexts in sound was important. In particular the way that sound might be placed in relation to the object and to space. A review of work on recorded sound (see appendix 4) supported the idea that sound recording could be considered, in some respects at least, analogous to photography, and so a direct descendent and successor of the initial photographic methodology of this research and practice. In line with the experiments within my practice, the identification of R. Murray

⁶² from Belle Krasne, ‘A Marcel Duchamp Profile’, Art Digest, v. 26 (15 January 1952), p.56

Schafer's and the World Soundscape Project's research which regarded sound as non-textual, beyond the oral was important, as was work on what could be called passive existing and ambient sound – the soundscape. Stephen Feld's promotion of a kind of materiality, sound as knowledge, embedded in the processes of 'taking place' or simply being, seems particularly useful, in terms of an art practice, and art practices rooted in materiality and the object. This is reinforced by Michel Serres' work on sound as both material and knowledge which in turn underpins its use as both a documentary and art medium. Walter J. Ong establishes sound as a methodology for identifying the interior condition of objects through aural consciousness, as the visual reveals only the surface. An examination of non-textual sound amongst artists suggested that within much sound practice there is a resort to surface reflections analogous to the photographic image.

Very little research or theory was invested in sound itself – as opposed to orality or musicality - until after the second world war, perhaps a consequence of the limitations of the technologies available. In exploring the field of sound and the sonic environment and its academic development over the last fifty years the French composer of *Musique Concrete* Pierre Schaeffer (1910-1995) and the Canadian composer and theorist R. Murray Schafer (b.1933) emerged as a major figures. Schaeffer began to define the fields of study and research and developed the descriptive glossary for these, including the definition of the 'sound object' (*l'objet sonore*). (Schaeffer, 1966: 95). The sound object is as an acoustical 'object for human perception and not a mathematical or electro-acoustic object for synthesis.' The sound object is then defined by the human ear as the smallest self-contained particle of the acoustic environment and is analyzable by the characteristics of its envelope (i.e., a bell,

a drum etc.) and is to be considered primarily as a phenomenological sound formation, independently of its referential qualities as a sound event.⁶³

The Canadian anthropologists Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan introduced the notion of 'acoustic space' in their journal *Explorations* (1953-1959) This referred to media transformations – the way that electronic media transformed and allowed for the reinterpretation of the history of orality and literacy. Carpenter went on to relate acoustic space to visual auditory interplays, such as the way the Inuit experience spherical dynamic space in the Arctic and how this relates to their artistic processes, and depiction of motion, depth and non-containment. (Carpenter, 1960: 65-70; Feld, 2005: 182)

The idea of auditory space emerged in the 1950s – the idea that space is audibly fused with time in the progression and motion of tones (Zuckerandl, 1956: 267-348 in Feld, 2005: 183) This was largely ignored by musicians but had a critical impact amongst anthropologists, especially in the study of ritual and sound, and informed the work of Stephen Feld, discussed below. (Feld 2005: 183)

4.3: Sound as a non-textual documentary medium



73. The WSP group 1973; l-r: R. M. Schafer, Bruce Davis, Peter Huse, Barry Truax, Howard Broomfield

⁶³ A sound event is the coalescence of sound objects, either in an organised way, such as music, or in an unsystematised way, such as ambient sound.

Carpenter and McLuhan in turn influenced the Canadian composer and environmentalist R. Murray Schafer who established, an educational and research group at Simon Fraser University during the late 1960s and early 1970s, which sought to establish a documentary archive of the sonic environment. It was called the World Soundscape Project (WSP). (The term 'soundscape' was coined by Schafer to describe the existing sonic environment.) The WSP grew out of Schafer's initial attempt to draw attention to the sonic environment through the study of noise pollution. The establishment of the WSP attracted a group of highly motivated young composers and students, and the group worked first on a detailed study of the immediate locale, published as *The Vancouver Soundscape*, and in 1973, on a trans-Canadian recording tour by Bruce Davis and Peter Huse, the recordings from which formed the CBC Ideas radio series *Soundscapes of Canada*. This series features extended excerpts of field recordings – the series comprised of ten one hour programmes - and is regarded as a milestone in sound documentary practice.

In 1975 a WSP research project made detailed investigations of the soundscape of five villages, one in each of Sweden, Germany, Italy, France and Scotland. Schafer's definitive soundscape text, 'The Soundscape: *The Tuning of the World*' was published in 1977. In this book Schafer defined the 'soundscape', analogous to the sonic landscape, and a term not just limited to pre-existing or ambient sounds – in other words, it was able to be 'made', in the manner of artwork, or musical composition. Emerging out of what he felt was increasing noise pollution, his approach was expansive rather than restrictive – he advocated a positive approach to the sonic environment involving education sensitising one to the soundscape and effecting positive change through this. He calls this education 'clairaudience', literally 'clear hearing'. His work on the sonic

environment continued with research involving ‘soundwalks’, an empirical method to identify (and distinguish) the soundscape for a specific location. In a soundwalk one moves through a limited geographic area, one’s ears as open as possible, registering all the environmental sounds.

According to Schafer the perception of sound occurs within three categories: *keynote* sound, *figure* sound and *soundmarks*. Keynote is the basic environmental sound that is steady, predictable and always there. It is the base of the sound. Figure sounds are in the front of the perceptive focus. They are surprising, sudden or annoying. Soundmarks are these sounds that you identify a place with consciously. It can be the special sound of a clock tower, a tourist attraction or a special acoustic.

In his studies of the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea the American anthropologist Stephen Feld has identified direct relationships between the sonic environment and being:

acoustic knowing as a centerpiece of Kaluli experience; how sounding and the sensual, bodily, experiencing of sound is a special kind of knowing, or put differently, how sonic sensibility is basic to experiential truth in the Bosavi forests. Just as 'life takes place' so does sound; thus more and more my experiential accounts of the Kaluli sound world have become acoustic studies of how senses make place and places make sense. (Feld, 1994: 6)

Feld has developed the term *acoustemology* – an amalgamation of ‘acoustic’ and ‘epistemology’ to describe this, a necessary way of using and understanding sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world. This, in some respects, argues sound as an existing condition, a system of knowledge, and to be considered as a kind of materiality.

4.4: Boxes of Sound

The French philosopher Michel Serres (b.1930) in his book *Le Cinq Sens* (The Five Senses: 1985; trans: 1998) theorises three kinds of hearing in his chapter on sound. *Les Cinq Sens* is an attempt to reclaim the body and its senses from what Serres regards as the arid ground of much phenomenological thinking. In a conversation with Bruno Latour, reproduced by Steven Connor in his essay 'Michel Serres Five Senses' (2005) he states:

When I was young I laughed a lot at Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. He opens with these words: 'At the outset of this study of perception we find in language a notion of sensation...' Isn't this an exemplary introduction? A collection of examples in the same vein, so austere and meager, inspire the descriptions that follow, From his window the author sees some tree, always in bloom; he huddles over his desk; now and again a red blotch appears – it's a quote. What you can decipher in this book is a nice ethnology of city dwellers, who are hypertechnicalised, intellectualized, chained to their library chairs, and tragically stripped of any tangible experience. Lots of phenomenology and no sensation – everything via language... My book *Les Cinq Sens* cries out to the empire of signs. (Serres with Latour, 1995: 131-2)

Serres' chapter on sound in *Les Cinq Sens* is entitled '*Boîtes*' (Boxes) and in the chapter he offers three types of hearing, which he also describes as 'cycles'. The first he identifies as 'proprio-centric'; that is the sound of oneself. The sounds of digestion, of exertion, of metabolism, the blood coursing our veins and even the crackle of nerves.⁶⁴ These are the sounds to which we are exposed continually, and which we subsume and

⁶⁴ This sound can be experienced in complete sonic isolation. Within the anechoic chamber at Harvard University where complete sonic isolation is achieved the composer John Cage (1912-1992) heard high and low frequency sounds: the static of his nervous system and the flow of his blood. (A Few Notes About Silence and John Cage: CBC Radio: 24th November 2004)

integrate within our consciousness. The second type of hearing is that which constitutes the social contract, the exchange of signals. Serres identifies that this type of hearing, like the first, attempts to close in on itself. We are both 'tuned-in' and 'tuned-out' simultaneously. A strand of this is what forms increasingly the model for all communication:

We can neither speak nor sing without the feedback loop that ensures that we hear our own voices. (Serres, 1998: 140)

Serres' third type of hearing is the most relevant to this research. It is a hearing that he characterizes as being 'beside itself':

The I thinks only when it is beside itself. It feels really only when it is beside itself. The linguistic I is shrunk down to the large memory of language, the indefinite integral of others, the closure of its open group, freezing itself in habit... I only really live beside myself; beside myself I think, meditate, know, beside myself I receive the given, vivacious, I invent beside myself. I exist beside myself, like the world. I am on the side of the world beside my talkative flesh.

The ear knows this space. I can put the ear on the other side of the window, projecting it great distances, holding it at great distance from the body.

Lost, dissolved in the transparent air, fluctuating with its nuances, sensible of its smallest comas, shivering at the least derision, set free, mingled with the shocks of the world, I exist. (Serres, 1998: 119)

Here Serres, though not specific, acknowledges the condition of displacement and dissociation that recorded sound demonstrates. (It also parallels Stephen Feld's 'acoustemology': 'sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world.') Serres goes further:

The third cycle, initiated by the rarest of hearing, and which requires that one be both deaf to oneself and to the group, requires an interruption of the closed cycles of consciousness and social contract, may already be called knowledge. (Serres, 1998: 141)

Serres' theoretical identification of this third type of hearing (in which one is neither listening to oneself or to associates) as knowledge is important in terms of this research and practice in its identification of the idea that something disembodied and displaced (such as a recording) can provide clear knowledge of something of its subject. Within this framework recorded and reproduced sound can be considered as 'knowledge'. It is also an argument for asserting the materiality of recorded sound and the way in which it embodies knowledge, and underpins the use of sound as both documentary and art,

Walter J. Ong, a scholar of anthropologic psychiatry, asserts that ancient man would have been aware of sound as revealing the interior state of objects and animals. In contrast, vision only reveals the surface. By tapping on a closed box, the sound of a hollow interior is produced. By listening, the interior properties of the box "magically" appear inside the listener's head, a phenomenon called aural consciousness. Sound acquires its power by the lack of experiential separateness between source and listener. (Ong: 1982)

Aural consciousness describes the spatial and material qualities and capabilities of sound – rather than merely resembling or appearing to be something, sound can identify something of the essential properties of something.

In an earlier work: *Le Parasite*, (The Parasite, 1980) Michel Serres outlines another useful model for thinking around and through sound. In French the term *parasite* has three meanings: as a biological parasite; as social parasite; and as noise.

'Noise' is a term from information and systems theory to describe the interference that occurs when a message is being transferred between a sender and a recipient along some channel. Serres argues that noise, which could also be called nonsense, disorder, chaos, is fundamental to the transfer of a message: this would seem contrary to what we would normally understand noise to be, that is, merely a nuisance. Serres draws out the positive quality of noise or interference to suggest that it is out of noise that new systems and patterns, and perhaps even new ways of thinking can emerge. (Serres: 1980)

The muteness associated with the absence of recorded – and by extension transmitted - sound within our history points to the elusive qualities of sound. It is a presence within all of human existence but until very recently its presence, un-captured, un-stored and un-reproduced, evaporated as it emerged. Serres' identification of 'noise' and interference as being associated with and essential to the transfer or transmission of information can be thought of as returning us to the core of the research. The absence of noise within the silent photograph precludes and excludes transmission of anything other than the surface or skin of the object or space.

Within art practices adopting sound and using what could be called non-textual and non-musical means, ambient environmental sound recordings have been used generally in the production of artworks as a way of transmitting something of the experience of that place or time. As Cathy Lane writes in 2000:

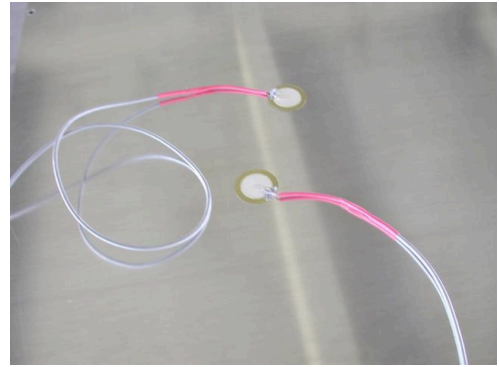
... sound artists ... are producing work which calls on experience of the space of enclosures or architectural space, built and natural, located and non located, public and private, urban and otherwise. These social spaces are often highly significant, on a personal level, to individuals, or on a social level, to a whole society, or sector of society. Much of our experience of architectural space is gathered through the aural space related to it. Sound

recordings made in existing architectural spaces, by sound artists such as Jake Tilson have captured the aural features and thus some of the architectural and social aspects of those spaces. Other composers have made compositional use of the acoustic qualities of a physical or architectural space by allowing sound to behave in a particular way in that space. In *I am Sitting in a Room* by Alvin Lucier, the architecture of a room is used as a resonator for a piece of spoken text which is projected into the room and recorded, over and over again, with the additional room resonances building up every time the text is looped back into the room. (Lane, 2000: 2)

The qualities reproduced within these works are the aural qualities of the spaces, in the way that a photograph reproduces the luminous qualities of space. All that is heard is sound reflected – in the manner of light - from surfaces. Different surfaces reflect sound in different and distinct ways, and conform to Walter Ong's ideas of acoustic consciousness but the emphasis on reflection seems to lack the essential resonances of 'things' and 'stuff', so important in material terms.

The American sound artist and electronic musician Stephen Vitiello has made work which goes beyond reflected sound. As artist-in-residence at the World Trade Centre in 1999 he made recordings of the building itself using contact microphones placed on the windows of the 91st floor. These capture the creaking and sway of the building, and external activity, such as helicopters. These recordings could be described as propiocentric for the (now destroyed) World Trade Centre. Vitiello also produced an album of electronic music called 'Listening to Donald Judd' in 2007. This was made by processing field recordings made in Marfa, Texas, some of which were made using Judd's sculptures.⁶⁵

65 <http://www.stephenvitiello.com/>



74. Microphones on Donald Judd sculpture. Courtesy of Stephen Vitiello

4.5: Capturing, preserving, reproducing:

I am not aware of sound being used to capture, preserve or reproduce exhibitions or artists' work in an accepted documentary sense.⁶⁶ Within the visual arts, documentary sound is generally used as a voice medium in which artists are interviewed and discuss their work, and is thus ultimately a textual form, radio arts' programmes being the principal site of this activity. Even when directed by artist-practitioners as in the case of Audio Arts, a cassette magazine founded in 1973 by William Furlong and Barry Barker that often recorded artists *in situ*, within exhibitions or in the studio, the emphasis is on the voice and textuality, as Furlong states in an interview with Mel Gooding: "I would describe Audio Arts as an artist-curated aural space for the voice..."⁶⁷ (Undated interview on Wimbledon College of Art website: <http://raw.wimbledon.ac.uk/?q=node/22>)

⁶⁶ The German sound engineer Robert Hermann has made detailed high quality documentary sound recordings of individual works or exhibitions, but only in cases where the works or exhibition have a significant sonic dimension, as in the works of Jean Tinguely.

⁶⁷ Audio Arts did sometimes include work in sound made by artists, serving as a occasional site-specific space for aural practice, but this was never its primary focus.

In my own experience of innumerable photographic installation shoots, the process of installation photography shares many similarities with the making of a sound-recording. Within large format photography a long exposure in conjunction with elaborate lighting is often used, (to benefit from the higher quality of 'slower' (lower ISO) film stock, and the superior colour reproduction of tungsten sensitive film), so the photographer or anyone else in the space needs to avoid interfering with the act of recording, usually by standing still, and out of shot – this is exactly the same in sound recording, excepting the (generally) longer duration of a sound recording. Clothing that might rustle or make noise is avoided, microphones are placed to avoid picking up either the sounds of the recording device itself or the person recording. Despite the necessary presence of an agent at the point of documentation, the ideal is for this presence to be excluded in the final result. It is a conceit that in the process of capturing, storing and eventually revisiting an event, the act of recording in itself is rendered invisible, only proven through the existence of the document. Within the recorded sound document both the viewer/recordist and the subject are present. A stillness and quietness may mask the sounds of the recordist, but their presence within the recorded space will always affect the acoustic dynamics of that space. In time, perhaps, a super-sensitive device of a kind yet to be made could pick up the tiny and ultrasonic sounds created by the presence of the recordist – the proprioceptive sounds of their body's processes, or the minute eddies of air and sound around their body, or the sounds of their degeneration and decay, a further acknowledgement of the temporal qualities of sound.

Ambient documentary sound recordings reproduced differ from photographs in that they do not offer a prescribed or fixed 'viewpoint' or locus as the photograph does. They do represent the position, or the experience of the viewer, but in addition

have the potential to represent something of the conditions within which objects are viewed, and which the objects themselves ‘experience’. They do not privilege the viewer over the viewed. The recorder cannot physically retreat beyond the range of the device in the way a photographer can get behind the lens. The sound document records everything audible within its frequency range.

The process of making the recordings has produced some interesting collateral consequences. In seeking to exclude my own sound from the recording I will wait until my breathing is steady and quiet – after walking around say - and will stand still, legs slightly apart, hands behind my back and staring ahead, all so that I can avoid any movement and rustle of clothing or noisy breathing. I find I can stay like this for several minutes, and it is an unobtrusive pose. There is something of an air of self-conscious ‘listening’ about it, perhaps with parallels in the self-conscious ‘looking’ of the photographer. The unintended consequence is that in being still and quiet I start to share the physical dynamics of the objects around me; I am more sculpture than viewer. The affinity with the objects, the ‘siding’ with things is enhanced. Whilst recording in the British Museum I had a very strong sense of being part of the community of objects, complicit with these.

The making of sound recordings seems to provoke a different response to photographing. Many, especially invigilators and visitor staff, have commented that there is no sound, that I’m ‘weird’.⁶⁸ This suspicion or un-acceptance of sound as valid means of documenting a space and objects is noteworthy, and supports the idea of the general assumption of the perceptual primacy of vision.

⁶⁸ My recording of John McCracken’s show at Inverleith House in Edinburgh in 2009 is almost perfect silence. The gallery is within the Royal Botanic Gardens and insulated from road and street noise.

The significance of the site, the objects it contains and its relationship to the soundscape it occupies became another important determinant in my practice. For example, the Freud Museum in London. Recordings made here were used in the work 'Monkey Business No. 32 (Sigmund Freud)' outlined in section 4.5. The study in the Freud Museum was the room in which he died in and includes Freud's own couch for patients - itself a linguistic prototype, a touchstone to the disciples of psychoanalysis and an object of secular veneration. This space provided a vivid soundscape, sometimes at complete odds with the room's and the objects' history. Helicopters, London traffic, sometimes giggly visitors, loud contemporary telephones and leaked audio-visual programmes.

The often paradoxical relationship between the subject of recording and the soundscape in which it is placed has become a prominent element within the practice. For example, the cool eroticism of the melancholic Portrait of Eleanor of Toledo, wife of Cosimo de Medici, by Bronzino (1503-1572) and famed for the artist's rendering of her gown, now installed in the sixteenth century room at the Wallace Collection, yielded harsh walkie-talkie notifications of deliveries to the back door. Busy major public contemporary spaces such as Tate Modern yield recordings that are reminiscent of railway stations or massive drinks receptions. Gallery III of Camden Arts Centre, due to its proximity to traffic lights on the A41 trunk road, sounds like a motor racing starting grid every few minutes.

It is a trope of art and culture television films that often music composed contemporaneously (or not) with the art they are showing is used. Classical music may have been used in the past in programmes such as Kenneth Clark's 'Civilisation' (1969)

to assert connoisseurial values, and the practice has been maintained, often lazily.⁶⁹

This is so ubiquitous as to seem normal, or ‘proper’ even. The Bronzino, for example, might be shown in conjunction with *seicento* madrigals and not the buzzing walkie-talkies with which it is usually surrounded.

The implication that emerges from within the sound-recordings is that, however much the context for art objects is refined and controlled, its sonic environment is disregarded, dissociated from any significant discourses around processes of display demonstrating the dissonance between what might be called the ‘proper’ readings of spaces and objects and how they ‘appear’ through the use and fore-fronting of ‘improper’ but extant, pervasive and authentic ambient sounds.

4.6: Sound and object

The consideration of the use of sound recording as an art practice and in relation to photography has led to ideas that relate sound with objects. Is it possible to use sound recordings to invert or re-configure their documentary capabilities and to place oneself alongside the object that is viewed? (This as opposed to making an image of it.) Is it therefore possible to demonstrate something of what it is like to be a museum or gallery object, how an object might ‘experience’ the display process? This places the sound art practice in a position in which it ‘sides with’ the objects and the processes of display it represents, *being with* rather than *looking at*.

⁶⁹ I speak from experience. I spent a period in the early 1980s as a music researcher in the Music and Arts Department of BBC Television.

A precedent and literary equivalent is the French prose-poet Francis Ponge's (1899-1988) writing, especially *Le parti pris des choses*, published in 1942, which has previously been translated as 'The Voice of Things', but more recently, and perhaps more accurately, as 'Siding With Things'. In this Ponge takes the side of specified objects - doorknobs, figs, crates, blackberries, stoves, water, etc. He elaborates their view and the world they inhabit. He does not anthropomorphise these inanimate or insentient objects he simply reflects something of their 'stuff'. In the words of Margaret Guiton, his English translator, his work is nourished by 'things'. (Guiton, 1994: ix) In *les plaisirs de la porte*, (The Pleasures of the Door) from *Le parti pris de choses* he writes:

With a friendly hand you hold on a bit longer, before firmly pushing it back and shutting yourself in – of which you are agreeably assured by the click of the powerful, well-oiled latch. (Ponge, 1994: 29)

(*D'une main amicable il la retient encore, avant le repousser décidément et s'enclure, - ce donc le déclic du ressort puissant mais bien huilé agréablement l'assure.*)

He writes of the ephemeral nature of snails' trails:

And so it is with all who express themselves this way, in a purely subjective mode, without second thoughts, without bothering to construct and shape their expression into a solid dwelling of more than one dimensions. More durable than themselves. (Ponge, 1994: 45)

(*Ainsi en est-il de tous ceux qui s'expriment d'une façon entièrement subjective sans repentir, et par traces seulement, sans souci de construire et de former leur expression comme une demeure solide, à plusieurs dimensions. Plus durable qu'eux-mêmes.*)

This could be comparable to the fugitive qualities of unfiltered ambient sound, dependent on the listener's mind for meaning or definition. Through this subjective process the viewer/listener is made complicit with the objects rather than the

institution in which they are housed. In placing the shared (between the viewer, the viewed and the listener) aural experience at the centre of the practice an extended insight into what happens within the temporal processes of display is revealed.

Recently within the philosophical study of perception an interest in sound has developed. In the introduction to their 2010 collection of edited essays the philosophers Casey O'Callaghan and Matthew Nudds provide an overview of the present condition of contemporary thought on sound:

No topic in extra-visual philosophy of perception has generated as much attention in recent years as that of sounds and audition. ... the past decade has seen a flurry of work on the nature of sounds and the content of auditory experience. Current research on the perception of speech sounds and spoken language, the experience of music, auditory-visual cross-modal illusions, and the nature of 'auditory objects' promises to impact and advance the philosophy of perception.

More important, however, it signals a departure from the tradition of relying upon vision as the representative paradigm for theorizing about perception, its objects, and its content. While the implicit assumption has been that accounts of visual perception and visual experience generalize to the other senses, nothing guarantees that what is true of seeing holds of touching, tasting, or hearing. Intuitions about critical issues or particular cases might differ in the context of different modalities. While it might seem obvious in the case of vision that perceptual experience is transparent, or that space is required for objectivity, gustatory and olfactory experiences might tell otherwise (see, e.g., Lycan 2000; A. D. Smith 2002). (O'Callaghan & Nudds, 2010: 2)

The identification of a departure from a primacy of vision within academic approaches to the philosophy of perception seems parallel to ideas advanced within this research and with that the possibility that sound can be said to provide a perceptual account of an object, event or situation. O'Callaghan and Nudds go on to

ask questions which echo ideas within this thesis which I think of as sound siding with objects, and outline two distinct contemporary philosophical positions on sound and perception: whether sound and its perception are wave-based, a more empirical approach, or whether it is source based, and therefore more closely related to the object. Beyond the significant discourses about speech and music and their audition, much of the most interesting contemporary thought on sound seeks to identify the location of sound, and in general terms follows the two models above, the former locating sound within the medium, (for example: Nudds, Sorensen, O'Shaughnessy 2010), the latter maintaining that a sound and its source are contingent on each other and unable to be separated. (for example: Pasnau, Casati and Dokic, O'Callaghan, 2010)

These positions present a context for the problematics of sound in relation to the ideas of sound allowing one to 'side' with an object outlined above. Sound as an empirical wave form in the medium is transferable and independent of its source and is able to occupy different locations. Sound dependent on its source is tethered, dependent on both the medium (of air, say) and its own source. A sound can travel only if its source does. In seeking to summarise and, to an extent, reconcile these positions the authors identify that sounds must have some basis in veridicality – verifiable reality – and that as such the experience of sound does not involve illusion, or at least not in the main. They write:

...sounds should have at least most of the features we experience them to have. This means that, all else equal, for some feature we experience sounds to have, we should prefer an account that does not ascribe illusion with respect to that feature. We can put the constraint as a slogan: avoid attributing unnecessary illusions. (O'Callaghan and Nudds, 2010: 8)

Sound therefore allows theoretically for a more verifiable account of itself, and in relative terms, from photography and the visual. What happens then, if sound is used

in an illusory manner, analogous to the practices of picturing within visual practices and the co-option of the indexical 'truth event' of photography; when sound is constructed to appear to be something when it is not?

4.7: Constructed Sound:

In the September of 2009 I presented a paper at a conference called *The Go Between* held jointly between the National Museum of Wales and the University of Glamorgan. The conference examined the relationship between the museum and the artist. (please see Appendix 4.3) The paper comprised, after a brief explanation, only sound and photographs, neither concurrent with the other – if an image was shown there was no sound, if sound played the screen was blank. The photographs were drawn from the photography generated within this research project and were of museum and gallery installations. The sound recordings were also of museums and galleries. There were no direct relationships between sound and image. The presentation finished by moving into the use of sound creatively by re-presenting versions of my two exhibited 'Monkey Business' works, the MoMA piece and the Freud desk piece. The paper provided a brief overview of my research and practice through this PhD. My intention was to try to use the photographic and sound material to represent the research.

The response to the paper was very positive, the non-textual approach was welcomed as appropriate to the subject and many participants acknowledged the lack of scholarly interest in the relationship between display and sound, other than as a didactic tool. In the audience was Simon Thorne, a sound designer, who had recently

completed recreating a megalithic soundscape for the museum's new 'Prehistoric Wales' display. We discussed working methodologies and in particular my use of direct unchanged field recordings. (Any editing was to constrain duration and not to change the content of the recordings.) He was astonished that I did not multi-track – layer different recordings on top of one another to enhance the sound – or otherwise 'doctor' the recordings. He then described the complex studio and editing processes he used to re-create, or imagine, the megalithic soundscape.

I had previously been aware of sound engineering and mixing as a process in cinema sound, particularly in the work of Alan Splet within David Lynch's films and now considered using it within the practice. This would constitute a significant shift – not least in terms of veracity and by extension the indexicality of reproduced sound.

In December 2009 I started to create sound works using multi-tracked field recordings made by others and available through the Freesound Project. These imagined or projected the sonic environment surrounding a significant site. The first work imagined James Joyce's grave in Fluntern Cemetery in Zurich. Joyce was a gifted musician, afflicted by poor eyesight and his writing is highly inflected toward both the sonic and musical. It is widely reported that Joyce's widow Nora was comforted by his being buried within earshot of the lion enclosure at Zurich Zoo, just beyond the cemetery. I knew I would be visiting Zurich and would record Joyce's grave so would be able to compare the real and the imagined sounds. The sound work was made using multi-tracking and included lions from Chicago, the sound of animals in Frankfurt Zoo, Swiss garden birdsong and another Swiss cemetery. In comparison, the field recording and constructed recording are not substantially different. The day I recorded in the cemetery there had been a heavy snowfall which contributes some depth and sound absorption, as well as the sound of its own melting. In the constructed recording this

was absent, and I had overstated the zoo noises.⁷⁰ This was interesting: in the ‘real’ recording in the close presence of the zoo, there is hardly any identifiable ‘zoo’ noise. In my desire to ensure its inclusion in the constructed recording I had enlarged and distorted the scale of these sounds.

At the point of writing the use of constructed sound is something I feel I have yet to investigate fully. It forms part of my day-to-day practice, but has yet to move beyond this. Within the hierarchies of my practice it figures below direct field recording. As a shift into something that has potentially performative elements, it requires some consideration. The processes of construction are also compositional and in this significant consideration, it breaks from the indexical. The field recordings, in whatever form they exist and are presented possess a direct link to that which they are a recording of, and this is conceptually impossible with constructed diegetic sound.

This chapter has followed the move of the researcher into an area of creative practice of which they had no previous experience. In reviewing a wide range of theoretical material a number of clear ideas and possibilities within the creative practice have emerged and developed. The most significant of these is that sound, used in the direct way which devolves from field recording, can ‘side with’ that which is recorded and break with the fixed position prescribed by photographic practice.

⁷⁰ I am sure any detailed or forensic analysis of constructed soundscapes could reveal anomalous conflicting sounds which would undermine the veracity of these recordings.

5: Evaluating my research, speculating about the future

This practice-led research follows the translation of a documentary practice into a creative practice. From the beginning the ‘messy method’ (Chapter 2.5) that achieved this translation has been driven by the extra-textual nature of the document: that is, the visual photograph and the aural sound document as it captures, preserves and reproduces an exhibition installation. The document’s relationship to what is documented - the conditions of the finished installation and exhibition of art and objects - and the inherent extra-textuality and elusiveness of these is essential to the ambitions of my practices as an artist. In the final chapter of my thesis it is important to evaluate my activities as an artist within my explorations as an artist-researcher. Both pursuits are propositional, both conform to the question: ‘what if?’ Neither can be neatly reduced to a ‘this is’. The processes of fine art and practice-led research are inevitably driven by subjective and playful ambitions – the results are likely to be inconsistent and slippery. In addition, a concluding state of resolution or realization, as in all creative endeavours, depends heavily on context and the empathy, if not complicity, of viewers and readers. As a result, a significant component of the conclusion of this thesis lies beyond the scope of language in the body of practical work I will submit for examination.

Within the thesis the concept of ‘installation’ has been elaborated against a shifting background of theoretical reading that has embraced art history, alternative research methodologies, documentary photography and the audio aspects of, to use Howes’s term, sensual culture. In following this particular intellectual journey I have attempted to draw out and define the intuitive experience of artworks being either ‘on’ or ‘off’ and claim that this condition is a specialised form of knowledge that is gained

through the process of installing exhibitions. This binary remains anecdotal and resolutely subjective throughout the thesis. Nevertheless, the question of artworks being either 'on' or 'off', 'proper' and 'improper', stimulated a series of practical experiments and theoretical speculations that changed the way I create art and this doctoral project has, from the point of view of my own educational and professional growth, yielded unexpected and invigorating results. I shall be exploring the sound world of galleries and museums for years to come and it seems that the process of writing was itself a stimulant to creative experimentation. And so the unfolding of ideas in the four chapters above can be now evaluated as a sequence of research outcomes that have changed the status and function of my approach to making art.

5.1: What changes in approach do the chapters demonstrate?

Within the physical processes involved in the production of temporary exhibitions, conditions arise that are significant in the realisation of art and other forms of temporary display, and by extension, the production of meaning, reception and the critical evaluation of art and the material on display. These conditions emerge through the processes of those physically working with art objects, the site or space within which these are placed for the purpose of exhibition and the means by which this is achieved. The American artist Gary Hill (b. 1951) has stated that just as there are good performances and bad performances of a piece of music, an installation can be "performed" well or poorly, depending upon the sensitivity and awareness of those responsible. (Real, 2001: 211)

These conditions are significant because they operate between the work, its site of exhibition or reception and the means of its production and arise within the final critical processes of tuning and testing an exhibit. Whilst not exclusively the domain of artists or museum curators and technicians, exposure to these conditions is often restricted to those with a professional involvement in exhibition production as distinct from an exhibition's intended audience. It may be that these conditions are part of a tactile process, deriving from the kind of privileged intimacy and direct contact that only artists and technicians – sometimes called art-handlers in more traditional environments – are able to have.⁷¹ They may be associated with a more attuned or involved approach to artists' work or material, the exhibition space or processes of making and doing which are drawn together and inculcated by a practical art school education and an emphasis on heuristic learning. In the manner that they are unwritten and in many respects unable to be written these conditions and understandings of process reflect a collective idea of 'tacit knowing' as defined by Polyani (1966) and expanded by Choo (1998).

An acknowledgment of these conditions is alluded to by the slippages in the use of the term 'installation' to refer to both a process and the consequence or product of the same process. This usage seems to infer an understanding that links the two explicitly. Writing nearly thirty years ago the critic Germano Celant notes: '...[it] (installation) is in and of itself a form of modern work' (Celant, 1982: 373) It is unclear whether this refers to the process or result, but can be understood as both, and underlines the consistent and often useful interchangeability of the term.

⁷¹ In 1991 I was shortlisted for the post of 'Head of Art-Handling' at the National Gallery in London. The terminology remains the same (Aug. 2010).

The conditions which arise through the processes of installation are often disregarded in art discourses and exhibition practice and are, as a consequence, under-researched. The art historian Mary Ann Staniszewski has written of exhibition design and installation, as a form of cultural production, as having been “generally speaking, officially and collectively forgotten.” (Staniszewski, 1998: xxi) Whilst perhaps referring more to the products than the processes of installation, one can grasp the thrust of Staniszewski’s argument; that a significant element within the production of meaning in art has been neglected in the discourse around the subject.

This hiatus may be because the processes of making an exhibition is generally understood as the means to an end and distinct from the end in itself within most critical discourses. It may be because, in the case of the visual arts, that these conditions fall between the perceived site of production: the studio, a legacy of the idea of the discrete work of art, and one in which much art-historical speculation and research is invested – and the perceived site of reception: the open gallery, and therefore constitute some kind of simple, inconsequential or immaterial transitional phase. The ‘to’ in ‘A to B’. As I explored in Chapter 2.3, it may be that there is a tendency within the practice of exhibitions to achieve a kind of condition of effortlessness or permanence in which traces of labour or evidence of process are excluded or diminished. In terms of the significant documentation and transmission of artists’ work, this tendency is reflected in the propensity of installation photography to ‘fix’ a version of any work in its final installed form, excluding any evidence of process, apart from the product itself. It may be that many critical discourses around art have excluded the processes of production as these are not held to be significant in the production of meaning.⁷²

⁷² This is changing in some areas of art and critical thinking. Relational Aesthetics, for example, makes process a discourse in itself, one in which the final result is often of less significance than the process.

These conditions, experiences and insights are, however, immersed in artists' practice of making work and the realisation of such forms part of an artists' critical discourse around art. Conversely, cognisance of these conditions does not tend to be part of a viewers' understanding of looking at art and contributing to their critical discourse – and it is this audience that could be said to generate the vast majority of critical material.⁷³ These conditions and experiences/insights are engaged in both practice and reception, often simultaneously. Writing of the pioneering director of the Hannover Landesmuseum and prototype of many contemporary art curators, Alexander Dorner, the contemporary curator Hans Ulrich Obrist states (that Dorner understood in the 1920s): "...the museum as an oscillation between object and process." (see e-mail Appendix 3)

This idea is reflected in the organisational structures associated with exhibition production, particularly with regard to the hierarchies of exhibition curation where those who 'make' an exhibition (technicians) are distinct from, and accorded less *kudos* than, those who 'arrange' an exhibition (curators), despite the collaborative proximity of the technician to the artist(s). It is as if an unwritten value judgement is made at an institutional level between the work of the hand and that of the head; between the practical and theoretical.⁷⁴

Much of what artists do is actually practical; whether as a maker or as their own technician. In the process of realising exhibitions, of testing and tuning, there is an

⁷³ I am thinking here of the curatorial emphasis of theoretical writing of Bourriaud in essays such as *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art reprograms the World* (2002).

⁷⁴ My own experience and discussion with Chris Osborne, Technical Manager at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art bears this out, to varying extents.

emphasis on the practical and material and this poses questions about the relative role of artists within the institutionalised context of exhibition culture.⁷⁵

The conditions that I have sought to reveal in this research are present within work that is 'installed' and on exhibition, installation as product, deriving as they do from the processes involved in achieving this state, but break down or dissolve when work is off-display: what I have referred to throughout this thesis as 'on' and 'off'. The knowledge gained through these conditions and experiences, or insights, is maintained informally through the experience of the artists and technicians, and sometimes documented, again informally, in the notes and instructions that artists' works accrue. This history is, however, distinct from the traces or history of production contained or even embodied within a discrete work of art, such as the identifiable marks of paint or traces of manufacturing process, on a Judd sculpture, for example.

It has been the burden of the first two chapters of this thesis to demonstrate that these conditions are important to our understanding of the 'white cube' - the modernist art space that persists and dominates within any contemporary thinking around visual art practice – even when it attempts to shake itself free through 'relational' or 'site-specific' practices. The first half of this thesis may therefore be seen as an attempt to reclaim a hidden knowledge that is shared and transmitted by an unobserved group of creative gallery practitioners who make possible the full realisation of an artwork. My aim has been to make visible the perspective of these

⁷⁵ The last twenty or so years have seen the development of what has become known as a 'curator-culture', one in which the curator occupies the principal role once occupied by the artist, as well as an additional role, once occupied by the critic. Producer, mediator, interface. This has been described as the 'curatorial turn' by Paul O'Neil. (essay title: *The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse*, 2007. Rugg, Judith (ed.), *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, Intellect, Chicago, 2007. pp. 13-28) Alex Farquharson has also identified the emergence of the verb 'to curate' and the adjective 'curatorial'. ('I curate, you curate, we curate' *Art Monthly* 269 (London 2003) pp. 7-10)

technicians who know that the conditions and insights of exhibition installation are part of the process that determines the meaningfulness of art. As I observed at the beginning of the thesis, when Grasskamp (2008) speaks of exhibitions requiring photographic realisation, he is describing a situation in which the image of a finalised installation eclipses the technician's act of 'installation'.

5.2: How photography can pick up the hidden world of exhibitions

As I explored in chapter 3.4, installation photography, through its transmission and reproduction will 'fix' a version of any work or exhibition in its final installed form. It is an adequate visual medium to document aspects of another visual medium but installation photography excludes non-visual sensory experience of an exhibition; aural, olfactory, as well as the temporal aspects; how light may shift over the duration of a day for example as well as much of the spatial experience of any exhibition. Despite these shortcomings, the installation photograph is the principal documentary form used to record, transmit and archive exhibitions and chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis address the complicity of installation photography in our shared denial that it is often the experience and knowledge of the gallery technicians that have made an exhibition look 'right'.

As a specific form, installation photography has barely changed since being described by the Irish artist and writer Brian O'Doherty as "...one of the teleological endpoints of the modern tradition. There is something splendidly luxurious about the way the pictures and gallery reside in a context that is fully sanctioned socially." (O'Doherty, 1976: 34) O'Doherty here defines both the success and ultimate

problem of the installation photograph: its aesthetic comfort. It serves a certain set of demands supremely well: these are largely aesthetic. A professional installation image enhances and in some cases aggrandizes its subject and through its conventions, this form of photograph sanctions work by establishing a nearly perfect seamless context within which anything can reside on or near the same level as that which is established as 'good'. In its exclusion of people or time and its technical refinement the installation photograph further develops the idea of a perfect and definitive art space. This type of photography's exclusion of the more contingent sensory environment that may surround an exhibition or installation only helps to serve the aesthetic demands better. In an installation photograph it is almost as if the art in the image exists in an ideal place, clear from distractions, within a parallel (and better) world. A world in which the artworks are resolved, at least.

However, within exhibition culture and practice another distinct form of photography exists, one that is informal, notational in intent, and often records the disregarded and collateral aspects of exhibition production. Informal photography is used widely within the field of exhibition practice and, as a form, it is not exclusive to professional or even experienced photographers. As I have established, the priorities within the use of this type of photography are not aesthetic and as a consequence it can provide a distinct set of viewpoints, of problems and contexts, excluded from professional, formal installation photography (Chapter 3.3).

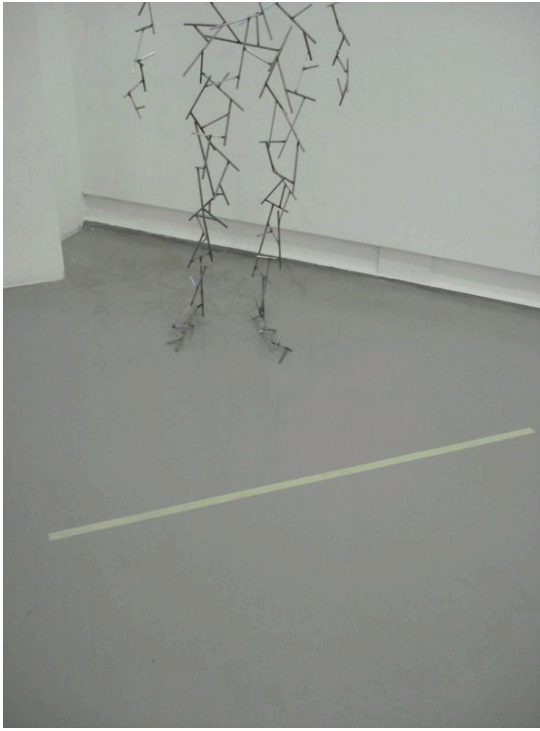
A third, informal and unofficial form of photo-documentation has emerged in recent years through the proliferation of online photo-sharing services. These throw up a huge number of images, some of which are concerned with aspects of art, material culture and exhibition not covered through the conventional documentary photographic practices above. The online databases allow for these images to be

organised according to virtually any taxonomic criteria. It is interesting to note that major institutions are becoming engaged in the potential presented by this form of photo-documentation, notwithstanding copyright issues, and embracing, and in some cases co-opting institutionally the material available.

During this doctoral research I have employed my wide experience of formal and informal photography (as discussed above in section 3.2 and 3.3), alongside my knowledge and experience of the processes of exhibition practice to corroborate something of the hidden or disregarded world of exhibitions. This, in its simplest form, involved a different way of looking, a shifting of focus from that which is displayed to the means of display, the contextual discourse of that display and the collateral effects of display. In a photograph of the chains used to hang a painting for example, the way that the chains cast shadows subvert the meaning of the painting; a man nailed to a cross. (see 75). In another example, a photograph of the floor of a gallery reveals a history of usages tracing the many temporary walls built at a particular point over many years with the spillages of paint or damage, similarly traceable to particular shows (see 76); the way that a work is lit in a particular way creates a shadow which may reveal, through its projection onto a floor, another way of seeing the work (see 77). A photograph may reveal absurd compromises within exhibition practices: a strip of masking tape being used to delineate a notionally protected space (78). The same type of tape, a few yards away is being used to hold together an elderly but tangible barrier (see 79). The discussion in chapter 3 above describes this informal dimension of photographic documentation as foundation on which I built my research.



75.-77. (clockwise from top left) Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Tate Britain, Tate Modern.



78./79. Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice

Establishing a context of practitioners working in this field of research was crucial in articulating the nuanced gap of knowledge that I wished to address. Other artists, notably Louise Lawler (b.1947) and Candida Höfer (b.1944) have made work using photographs of art on display (Lawler, see illus. 80) and museum interiors (Höfer see illus. 81). In most cases the work interrogates the status of artwork within these institutional contexts and value systems attached to what are, in the main, U.S. museum and gallery spaces. The processes engaged with within these artists' work are related primarily with overt power relationships. Lawler can be understood as operating as an artist involved in a practice engaged in Institutional Critique, albeit a little more playfully than Hans Haacke through her apparent affection for the work in her images. Höfer explores the monumentality of certain kinds of institutional space but the constraint of their practices reflects the difficulties of using a photographic practice to explore the less visible or explicit within this context. The erasing of traces of labour and process in

the realisation of installations creates a visible spectrum that in many respects resists, or at least deflects photography.



80./81.(l) Louise Lawler: *Pollock and Tureen, Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremain, Connecticut*. 1984

(r) Candida Höfer: *College of Architecture Chicago I*, 1994

Through my own practice of documenting exhibition installations I begin to uncover the potential of moving across different sensory registers and contrasting technologies for capturing and preserving an installation. Chapter 4 is the point at which I venture beyond the visual document in order to explore the potential of audio recording as a means of responding to the concealed world of exhibition installation. I now want to consider the range of ideas that inform my move into audio practices.

5.3: How sound recording does an equally interesting job as documentation

In extending the methods of documenting an exhibition to sound recording an entirely different and distinct sensual register is engaged. In *Empire of the Senses: the sensual culture reader* (2005), David Howes describes the ‘ocularcentrism’ that allows

Western culture to reduce its social and material environments to language-like structures that are 'read' like texts. (Howes, 2005: 399) Howes distinguishes his view from earlier critiques of Western visuality (such as Martin Jay's influential *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* [1994]) claiming that it is not enough to challenge the promulgation of spectacle and surveillance, we also have to promote the role of sound, touch and smell. Indeed, in Howes' book, Feld (who we encountered in section 4.2) criticises Murray Schafer (the topic of section 4.3) for failing to treat the sensual domain in which we live as a single, equal plane of experience. (Howes, 2005: 184) In many ways the shift from photography to sound recording in my research is a re-evaluation of the sensual continuum brought into a state of 'interplay' during the process of exhibition installation. There seem to be many points at which my investigation has mirrored the ideas explored by authors such as Howes and Feld in their writing on the human sensorium and sensual culture.

The point is that where photography excludes, sound is inclusive - there is leakage from the entire sonic environment which surrounds an exhibition, and which cannot be easily excluded. In approaching an exhibition and material through auditory rather than visual means an entirely different register of present conditions become known. These can be at odds with the idea of a projected 'proper' or even appropriate sonic environment and reality – the ubiquity of the squelch of the walkie-talkie in major museums providing the soundtrack to a history of the world's art. These capabilities of sound and its temporality, its ability to capture an entire sonic environment all allow it to offer a multiplicity of positions relative to the subject of documentation. Sound shares a medium with the objects and spaces in any recordings. In a clear distinction from photography it can capture the sonic experience of its subject in addition to the sonic condition of that object.

Recent work on sound and perception which challenges the primacy of the visual in perceptual terms provides a useful support for the idea of sound as a medium with both documentary and creative potential within what has been a largely visual domain. “No topic in extra-visual philosophy of perception has generated as much attention in recent years as that of sounds and audition.” (O’Callaghan & Nudds, 2010: 2)

Using sound recording within a creative practice has led me to consider more carefully the relationship between a document and its documented object. Unlike an installation shot, a sound recording seems to undo the stability of audience attention. In this sense, chapter four of this thesis addresses a form of documentation that fails to ‘fix’ (render unmoveable) the process of installing exhibits and, therefore, reinstates, to an extent, the original interplay of ‘on’ and ‘off’, and the tension between ‘proper’ and ‘improper’, that informed the creative work of the technician who installs an exhibition. Chapter 4 suggests that sonic experiences ‘side’ with their object of attention, and that the user of an audio recording is the state of *being with*, rather than *looking at*, the documented material. Within the intellectual life of an art school any form of practice that appears to be companionable and complicit, rather than interrogatory and critical, is likely to be perceived as slight or lacking in rigour. However, the experience of listening to a sound recording of a gallery space places the listener *in* that space – it is impossible to imagine that you are somewhere else. The exclusionary aspects of photography preclude the unrestricted capture of sound recording. Recorded sound reflects the co-relation of object, audience and context, and demonstrates something of the actual phenomenology of experiencing material on display (not just artworks, but museum objects as well). Creating sound documents of exhibition installations shifts our attention away from the ocularcentric nature of visiting galleries. In focussing on

the sonic envelope that surrounds an exhibit, the presence of an object in a gallery is suspended within our expanded awareness of the full sensual range of the exhibition experience.

Throughout this thesis, the concept of 'tacit knowledge' has acted as an index of the embedded knowledge of the exhibition technician. We have assumed that this knowledge is entirely located in the visual 'rightness' of an installation. As both an artist and an experienced gallery manager, the extension of my research into sound recording has opened up the possibility that my 'tacit knowledge' is embedded in the fullness of sensory perception. Thus the full sensual range of the exhibition experience can be extended to the hidden world of the act of installation. With sound recording we begin to reclaim those hidden, yet highly active, dimensions of installing exhibits in gallery or museum environments. Therefore, the key conclusion that follows from my doctoral project is that the shift from visual to sound documentation has, beyond the revitalization of my practice as an artist and the accompanying expansion of pedagogic material that I can draw upon when teaching on fine art courses, is an enhanced understanding of the 'tacit knowledge' that is embodied in the concept of 'installation' in both its processes and consequences. Although I did not set out to respond to Staniszewski's identification of exhibition installation as a form of cultural production that is officially and collectively forgotten, my evaluation of my project is that I have provided a creative response to the collective amnesia this art historian describes.

5.5: The possibility of further research

I note that acoustic design – the consideration of how sonic ambiance affects our use of buildings – is now widely used in architectural and urban development projects. A Google search suggests that this aspect of environmental planning is a well-established response to both the commercial and socio-cultural dimensions of problematic noise.⁷⁶ One of the significant outcomes of my practical research, demonstrated by the recordings I have submitted as evidence of my creative practice within this doctoral project, is that sonic ambiance is under-considered in galleries and museums. This is not just a matter of the disruptive effect of babies crying or people talking loudly. These are part of the life of an exhibition and, although they conflict with the library-like silence which may have characterised looking at artworks in the past, they do not strike me as having an impact on the ‘on’/‘off’ status of installation. My interest here is the collision of installation sounds that have occurred within the visual planning of a museum space. The future of my research lies in my sonic ‘observation’ that an installation can look ‘right’ but sound ‘wrong’.

One of the most poignant field recordings I made during the later stages of my research is of the ‘Messiah’ Stradivarius, a violin of 1716 displayed in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The instrument is in an almost flawless condition and so a requirement of its donation to the museum (in 1948 by the violin makers William E. Hill and Co.) is that it should never be played. An object of sonic refinement is now, and

⁷⁶ <http://www.machacoustics.com/?gclid=CleA1LGck6QCFYn-2AodNVK7IA>
<http://www.hanntucker.co.uk/>

always will be, mute. The Ashmolean Museum has recently been almost entirely rebuilt, remodelled and reorganised. Following this refurbishment of the Ashmolean, the 'Messiah' is in a gallery, which is adjacent to a busy lift. As one looks at the violin, an object of genuine mystique, the sound one hears is a recurring 'bing-bong – going down'. This recurring sound will be resonated by the violin's celebrated sound-box – perhaps the most valued sound box of all the Stradivarii. This juxtaposition seems a crass piece of design, an unconsidered decision about content and context.

Whilst I was developing a sound piece based on the recording I made of the 'Messiah' on display I sent an e-mail to Rick Mather Architects, the architectural practice responsible for the refurbishment, seeking comments:

Dear Sir/madam,

I am an artist undertaking AHRC funded practice-led PhD research at Northumbria University. My research examines (briefly) the conditions - philosophical - of objects undergoing the processes of display. My own background is in gallery management and exhibition design - including at the Architectural Association in the mid-1990s. My research and practice uses sound - field recording - to explore and 'side' with objects on display. (Some examples are available on my website, details below)

I visit and record many museums - they all have unique sonic environments, which are, in the main, beyond any kind of direct control and often at odds with what is able to be seen. I was struck by a particular set of conditions at the new Ashmolean Museum, which I understand the practice designed.

In recording the site of the famously mute 'Messiah' Stradivarius the predominant recurring sound is that of the lift announcement. ('Bing-bong - going down.')

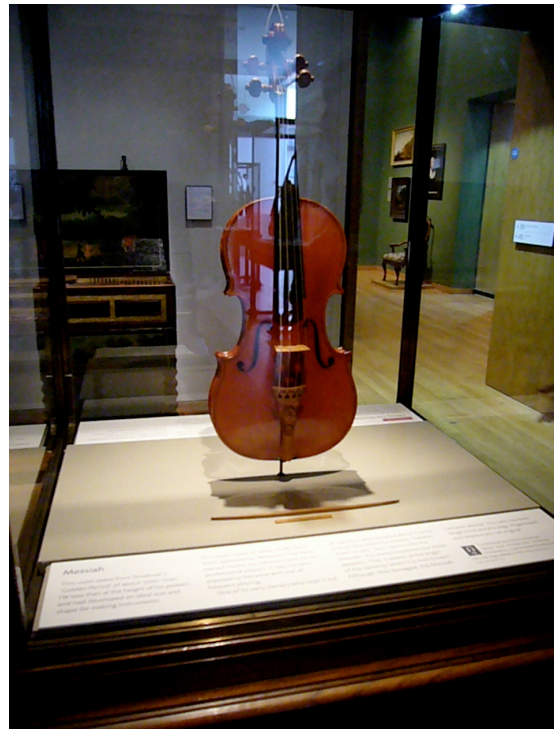
I have no direct question, but would be interested if any one from the practice might like to comment, however briefly, on this? Or to comment on the consideration given to the museum's sonic environment within the design process?

Please understand the academic nature of my question - I don't take a position in these matters - I rather enjoy the many cultural dissonances I encounter. That this was a recent project and fresh in the team's mind is salient to my questions as much as the condition itself. It will simply be useful for me to be able to place direct comment on a design process within recent museum design projects within my thesis.

Many thanks, in advance,

Andrew McNiven

This message is dated 29/6/2010. I have yet to get a reply. If I eventually receive a response it may be possible to develop a second generation of sound works that respond to the issue of sonic planning in museum environment.



82. Asmolean Museum, Oxford. The 'Messiah' Stradivarius

Appendices:

Appendix I: A Detailed Account of an Installation

Julian Opie: Lisson Gallery, November 1990



Julian Opie: Lisson Gallery, November 1990.

A single photographic image of an installation taking place is used as a touchstone from which to describe in fine detail what happens in a gallery spaces when it reverts from being shared space within the public domain to being the (relatively) private site of labour for artists and gallery technicians. Embedded within the

photograph and its description are many clues as to what artists do and the process of bringing work to display.

The photograph shows an arrangement of matt yet reflective white rectangular planar forms, seemingly attached to a wall, clear of the ground by c.600mm. These look as if they might be enameled, in the manner of 'white goods'. The arrangement of forms is obviously hollow, as a pair of human legs emerge from beneath, and an arm extends into the space above holding what appear to be cleaning materials; a cloth and a metal container of some kind of specialised cleaner.

The forms are mounted on a white-painted wall, which has a small 'reveal', a gap, at its bottom. The floor around the bottom of the wall is made of concrete tiles. These suggest a gallery or an art-space. The floor is dusted with either wall-sandings or drilling-waste. Just beyond the rectangular wall forms a set of step ladders can just be made out, as well as one end of what might be a low bench, with visible welding marks.

The photograph was taken in the Lisson Gallery in London, and is of the artist Julian Opie finalising the installation of one of his pieces in a show which would open later that day. The day is the 22nd November 1990, a Thursday, and the day on which the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, resigned. Both Julian and myself had telephoned close family members because of this, he his father, a long-time opponent of the Thatcher government. (Throughout the installation period we had been listening to the radio station 'Melody FM' at Opie's request. It played easy-listening music aimed at the over-50 audience and featured minimal speech presentation. It could be called 'muzak'. It had been launched by Lord Hanson, a major City of London figure, and a strong supporter of the Thatcher government, and it was reported that it was programmed to reflect directly his tastes and requirements, including regular financial

reports. Opie had been listening to it whilst working in his studio and felt it suited the work in the show, which included highly finished freestanding partitioned works, reminiscent of controlled corporate interiors.)

Given the condition of the floor and the fact that steps etc. were still in the space it is like to be earlier in that day than later. The fact that the work is being polished whilst the floor is still dusty reveals some of the hierarchies of the situation.

The dust should have been vacuumed up before polishing as it may be raised whilst being vacuumed and the work will require another polish. Clearing the floor is the technician's or gallery manager's responsibility. This is for safety primarily, but it is also to allow for work to be seen properly without distraction. However, the artist has priority to the work and its condition. He is focused on this and has either not noticed or ignored the dust on the floor. The technician or gallery manager will defer to him as the artist and will wait for him to move before clearing the dust. This could be because; the artist is 'difficult', and it's better to give him his head; that the technician or gallery manager would rather wait until the space is fully clear so as to reduce the risk of damaging the work whilst vacuuming; that the technician or gallery manager is sensible of the artist's anxiety prior to the exhibition's opening and that it is therefore better to have the artist working than hanging around...

The truth is probably a mixture of all three. Opie has very high standards in terms of making and displaying work - his work is always very well finished, usually by him, and he expects a similarly high standard of those around him. This could be very demanding of technical and handling staff. The gallery had a poor vacuum cleaner with a damaged head and I was anxious as to whether I would be able to reach underneath properly. (The work projected out quite far and access underneath was limited - the

floor texture and poor grouting resisted sweeping). We were close to opening and it is better to keep artists busy, as the technician or gallery manger is responsible to the gallery and needs to ensure that both the gallery's and artists' requirements are satisfied in this situation.

A checklist, either mental or actual, will be prepared and the exhibition ticked-off down to the opening. The gallery manager and technicians will often need to prepare other work in offices or other spaces, ensure the building is functional - lavatories working etc., ensure that signage or other informational material is correct, that any security measures are in place and functional, that press access is possible, as well as other privileged accesses. (Certain collectors, notably Charles Saatchi, prefer to see shows outside opening hours. Saatchi also prefers 'first refusal' on work, so likes to see work before others. He would often arrive unannounced and uninvited well in advance of shows' openings, causing problems)

That catering and waiting staff have what they need, but are not in the way. That materials, works not exhibited, tools etc. can be taken away and stored easily, securely and safely. Other concerns are present - that any technical crew are 'looked after'. They have often worked long hours on the exhibition, often more closely with the artist than anyone else within the gallery, but are often omitted in invitations to events relating to the show.

(There may often be several strata of hospitality around an exhibition, a 'public' private view, a 'private' private view, a gallery dinner held at a restaurant or club and a highly select private dinner at the gallery owner's own home, with private caterers.)

For this particular show we had removed the entire gallery lighting set-up, and had replaced it with fluorescent tubes. This had meant adapting fluorescent units to

attach to and take power from the gallery's ERCO tracking, a high-end remote-controlled installation. We had brought in an electrical engineer to advise us, and myself and a technician adapted and installed the units. The electrical engineer was retired but was a member of the regulatory board of the Institute of Electrical Engineers and was punctilious, which delayed our progress, requiring several late finishes.

The gallery or technical manager is also responsible for supervising and facilitating photography. In this case, due to the relative complexity of the installation, photography would be scheduled for after the show opened. Often, however, a show might be temporarily installed overnight or when the gallery was closed, to allow for installation photography to be undertaken and a catalogue produced in time for the show's opening, complete with images of the work *in situ*. To allow for the controlled tungsten lighting required for high quality large format photography blackout was usually required which meant that overnight was a better option. This meant that gallery managers and technicians would work nights regularly, but would still be expected to work during the day. (I often worked 70 or 80 hour weeks until exhaustion and asserting a proper overtime rate reduced the pressure.)

Appendix 2: Practice

Sites photographed, (p) and recorded, (r) throughout this PhD project:

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, (p,r)

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, (p,r)

Berwick Barracks, Berwick-upon-Tweed, (p)

Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Brighton (p)

British Museum, London, (p,r)

Camden Arts Centre, London, (r)

Castle of Otranto, Italy, (p)

Freud Museum, London (p,r)

Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries, (p)

Hereford Museum and Art Gallery (p)

Inverleith House, Edinburgh (r)

Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow (p/r)

Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria, (r)

La Nuovo Arca, Bari, (p)

Laing Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, (p,r)

Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice, (p,r)

Musée des Beaux Arts, Lille, (r)

National Gallery, London, (r)

National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, (p,r)

National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, (p,r)

Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, (p)

Northumbria University, (p)

Otranto Cathedral, Italy (p)

Paxton House, Paxton, Berwickshire, (p)

Pitt-Rivers' Museum, Oxford, (p)

Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Edinburgh, (p)

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, (p,r)

Sine Die, Bari, Italy, (p)

Sir John Soane's Museum, London, (p)

Swedenborg House, London, (p/r)

Tate Modern, London, (p,r)

Tate Britain, London, (p,r)

Tate Store, London, (p)

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (p,r)

Wallace Collection, London, (r)

Wyeside Arts Centre, Builth Wells, (p)

Zeppelin University, Friedrichshafen, Germany, (p,r)

Zurich James Joyce Foundation, Zurich

Appendix 3: Transcripts

3.1: Interview with Chris Osborne, Technical Manager, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK. 27th April 2010 (Unedited transcript)

AM: One of the things that keeps cropping up in my research is the 'white cube' space and the protocols, the etiquette of that space and I have sense that these exist, that these are often unwritten, but that people subscribe to them. Do you think one can say that or am I being a bit old-fashioned about it?

CO: I think we still use that as a reference point when we're talking about space, and I still refer to it to make a distinction between BALTIC, the institution, and more site-specific installation, some of which I was involved with before, in my years of being a freelance person, doing things with warehouses or the towers of the Tyne Bridge. That's a very different set of approaches that you have - you enter a space with a different kind of charge. I'm very interested in the 'charge' of spaces and if you think about the 'white cube' space it's a dead space and most of the spaces that do get referred to as 'white cube' spaces are usually in interesting buildings, or have interesting architectural features. I've not been to the [Gallery] for years but I do remember that having a certain Gothic-ness to it, and also the Ikon in Birmingham which was an old school-house and has these lovely spaces, but at the same time they are kind-of 'white cube' as designed gallery spaces that get changed slightly with each show.

AM: Let me clarify slightly. One of the things I'm discussing within the PhD is the evolution of the modernist art space which is kind-of the 'white cube' space, but not

explicitly the 'white cube' space - it may not have the precise parameters of the 'white cube' space so perhaps here I should say the modernist art space. Do you think there is a way that you always operate within a white-walled space that is consistent?

CO: Let me come at this from a different angle. One of the things that happened here at BALTIC was the first director Sunne Nordgren referred to the spaces here as limitless in their flexibility. Well that's a complete fallacy. You're limited by so many things. You're limited by floor loadings and environmental conditions, whether or not you can control the light, and when you have a space like BALTIC which wasn't built ostensibly to house a collection or be a museum we do have a situation where we only have one floor which is actually climate controlled - the rest of the spaces are fairly stable but we can't influence the humidity in them other than through slight changes in the building control systems.

AM: Does that present problems in terms of Government Indemnity⁷⁷?

CO: It does. We have one floor that is fully up to spec. It is climate controlled and also fully secure. BALTIC was designed with other things in mind - it was about the temporary, it was about the ever-changing, with the concept of it being an 'art factory' - we actually make things here. As the years have gone by, either because of the vision of curators, directors or because of economic necessity, we have taken in a lot of shows that have come from other institutions, which is a bit of a struggle sometimes because

⁷⁷ Government Indemnity is a scheme which allows public museums and galleries to borrow and to show work and objects that would be too prohibitively expensive for these types of institution to insure. In return for underwriting any losses the scheme requires a high standard of gallery management, and stringent minimum security and environmental control standards.

to satisfy, say, Tate's stringent requirements, the works have to go on Level 3, unless we have a waiving of climate control, like we did with the Damien Hirst stuff we just had as part of the 'Artists' Rooms' thing. It's a difficult thing and once you try to shoe-horn-in 'museum-type shows' - in inverted commas - into what was conceived as a very dynamic contemporary *temporary* exhibition space then you start to run into problems. You were talking about 'protocols' and as you know the protocols can change from one institution to another, but there are general protocols in terms of handling and security, climate control and light level and those kind of things, and we can do a lot to satisfy these, but there are some things that you just can't do because the building was never set-up in that way in the first place.

AM: Do you do things like have a standard hanging height?

CO: We do, but that gets changed all the time because everybody has a different opinion. My favourite one, and I say my favourite one as it's also my kind-of Nemesis in a way, is the exhibition lighting because I always end up, by default, doing the exhibition lighting, for every show, bar about four, in the history of BALTIC. I'm not saying I'm any good at it, but I don't get many complaints. The interesting thing about exhibition lighting is that everybody and their dog seems to have an opinion and seems to be an expert, so you have situations where you have four or five people telling you how they would like the show lit, and trying to demonstrate some great grasp of the physics of lighting and somehow you end up with the lighting scheme you had in the first place and have returned to because you know what you're doing but you have to let other people have their ownership of it in some way. So you're always going to get into difficulties like that and sometimes the more cooks around the pot there are the more

time-consuming it becomes and the more fraught it can become.

AM: Do you generally work with one curator, perhaps one artist at a time?

CO: It can really depend, generally, yes, just one member of the curatorial staff will have the job of being the curator of the show, if they're actually curating the show, or it might be a visiting curator, but generally, yes, they will be in charge, acting as the producer of the show, as it were. And obviously we do group shows as well. The last few have been with single artists, most of them living - I can't remember the last time we worked with a dead artist, or sometimes you get to work with the dead artist's widow, which can be difficult...

AM: I've done a couple of those...

CO: (Chuckling) Yes those can be very difficult. Then there's the lending institution, and maybe a visiting curator, and conservators - with the current show, 'Jenny Holzer', we had a whole team of people who came over from Switzerland who were in charge of installing the LEDs and some came over from Jenny Holzer's studio in New York, and in all honesty, there's a kind of feeling amongst all of us - 'Why are these guys here? - because they're not actually doing anything that we can't do. And they're not really advising us that much and it turned out that one of the people who was sent over, and paid with public money, had only been with the studio a week and this was kind-of a 'jolly' - she didn't add anything to the situation.

AM: Yes I've had this. We've ended up paying for people who are superfluous...

CO: Which I'm very strongly principled about the fact that it's public money that I'm spending, and I spend a lot of public money in my job, as it's my job to order the materials and the labour and make sure things happen, and I know how much things cost and I know how much materials cost and it's sometimes difficult to be in a position where you're brokering a good deal with suppliers to get the best possible price and then on the other hand you find out there's been an agreement made to fly someone over, who demand that they *only* fly business class... and there has to be some kind of spine on these things sometimes because artists are just people at the end of the day and I think to come back to the use of the word 'trope', which I understand from phototropism or heliotropism in plants as a movement towards the light. I guess there's this interesting thing of the way things do change as they pass from one place to another, from one institution to another, and once a work goes into a collection it all of a sudden becomes incredibly valuable, with an incredible need for it to be conserved. Sometimes if you're working with an artist and it's brand new work, straight out of their studio, then they don't really care how it's treated, particularly and they will be very un-precious about things - the great story about Anselm Kiefer when Martinspeed [an art shipper] turned up to take some of his paintings to a show in Italy and he'd given them the wrong size on one of his paintings and it wouldn't fit in the truck, so Anselm took a saw to the stretcher, cut the stretcher and folded the painting in half and the guys from Martinspeed were horrified and asked him to sign a bit of paper - "we can't arrive in Italy with one of your paintings folded in half, are you crazy." Kiefer just said, "It's my painting I don't give a shit."

AM: I was working with Richard Hamilton on a show at the ICA and we had some works of his from the fifties from the Tate Collection. He just picked one up and the

woman from the Tate blanched and nearly fell over. The conservation status of the work was clear, but where does the ownership reside? He made the bloody thing.

CO: I guess, officially speaking, that once he sold it... Kiki Smith did the same here. She picked up one of her bronze figures with no gloves on. You know how the grease on your fingers can mark bronze straight away - well it turns up a few weeks later. You're always going to get these difficulties in the way things are perceived value-wise, and also the way artists are perceived, their place within the hierarchy and how some artists get the total red-carpet treatment and others don't. I think as technicians we like to treat everyone the same and the last thing we want to do is deal with divas and prima donnas.

AM: I used to find that often, and particularly if you are working with a commercial gallery as I was at the Lisson, the artists wanted to deal with me, and started to use me as a conduit to deal with the gallery, because I was somehow safe, because I dealt with 'stuff', in the way that they dealt with 'stuff' and they were somehow more comfortable with that.

CO: Exactly.

AM: Which of course puts you in a very difficult position with the gallery. The artists come in and the directors or whoever are all over them and they want to come down and have a cup of tea with you in the basement... you've got a workshop here, you probably end up with the artists camped out.

CO: Well that's kind of where I come from, working with artists very directly, very

closely, now as you get into management, as you know, you don't get that fun side anymore as you're always shuffling paperwork, while the lads working on the floor are actually making the relationship with the artist.

AM: That was one of the things that I found, that was one of the things I wanted to go onto - the intimacy with the work, the artist. I'm going to dig something out:

"Artists and technicians have all experienced the process of the art space shifting from private to public as an exhibition opens to its audience and the curious sense of violation or loss of intimacy associated with this. (Compromising the ability of the artist or technician to 'see' the work in the same way as an audience – lets discuss- good point – they always will however) One has inhabited a space with the same small group for many hours a day over one or two weeks. There may have been an 'overnighter' as the opening gets close. A sense of urgency and imperative grows as the opening gets closer and everyone works with a greater intensity. The last couple of days are punctuated by intimations of what is to come, minor violations, as others, perhaps part of the organisation, but not intimately involved in the process of installation start to inhabit the space. The media may be accommodated at this stage – it's never inconvenient, even if it is. Finally, the last of everything extraneous is cleared and the technicians and often the artist are in another space, the workshop or similar, all tension gone. Nothing more can be done. The public are in there, in an appointment described by the invitation card and irresistible. One returns into the now crowded space, which is no longer the intimate space that you have known. It is inhabited by others. This the strangest moment, as you already know what is there, very well, too well, and you have no purpose in being there."

CO: I think this totally happens, you've put your finger on it, because some of the work is very intense, you do build up a relationship with things, even things you think you're going to hate. Because let's not forget, us technicians and gallery managers, we're human beings as well, and some of us have got into this because we are genuinely into the visual arts. I did Fine Art here, at Newcastle, so you already have this relationship, this interest, you already have this knowledge, and so you can also form an opinion about what's coming up in the programme. In some ways curators get to work on certain shows and they occasionally might have to work on a show they are not particularly interested in, but generally they get to follow their interests. As a gallery manager, as a technical team, you get to work on everything, whether you believe in the work, or like the show, or like the artist. (A.: You have to learn to dissemble.) You have to learn to try and get through. And that's very difficult when you come up against situations where somebody else has made the decision that they want to make it difficult in some way, for whatever reason, or whatever kind of politics are going on internally or between the internal and the external. Our new director Godfrey [Worsdale] put it to me, as when he came in, he realised we had a crazy situation where I was basically the technical team, completely reliant on freelance people, that I was at the pointed end of the vortex, because what he understood was that I was at the end of the process as my job is delivering, so my job is always going to be at that sharp end, where it is intense, where difficulties do arise, where changes happen, where you have to try and maintain a rigid framework because of finances etc., but still somehow maintain an incredible flexibility and an incredible alacrity to any kind of crazy ideas that might come up last minute.

AM: I've often described as you have to be in a position to never say "No"; you have to say "Yes, but..."

CO: I would beg to differ slightly on that, because I've taken the stance where I have the right to say "No", and in some occasions when I say "no" people better believe me because it won't be out of pig-headedness - there will be reasons. It's got to be like that - if somebody wants to do something incredibly expensive last-minute when there isn't the time, there isn't the budget, then quite clearly. that's a "no".

AM: I suppose I was meaning more in the sense of "if you want to solve a problem...", when I started working at Camden Arts Centre they had a Gunther Förg show scheduled, but nobody had bothered to check the building - the work was these huge bronze stellae - the spot loadings just wouldn't take the work, but they had gone through and planned the whole show without ever having gone back to the technical team to find out whether they could actually do it. Are you involved when the programme planning meetings are happening?

CO: As soon as possible. One of the things we did do quite well here was make my job part of the programme team and there's no doubt about that whatsoever, and I do work with my colleagues to look at things and that was in some ways, in the early days, at my insistence - if you get me involved in the planning as early as possible then we can plan things better, which then means we can track our budgets better, we can schedule things better, and it's a lot less pain for everybody. We don't want to come to work for pain, we want to achieve something, and be able to walk away from something you feel proud about and not burnt out, knackered and pissed-off, which unfortunately has been the case here at BALTIC over the years because of the various fractures that have occurred over the years, and despite the fact that I'm very, very proud of what I've achieved, what others have achieved here, there have been difficult times for me

personally and for some of my colleagues because we've had a foot on the gas pedal since we opened the doors, before we opened the doors and that's never really come off. It's slightly coming off now I've got a team again to delegate things to...

AM: Have you got a staff then...?

CO: They're kind of on a part-time basis. I have an assistant technical manager which is fantastic and I can delegate shows to him completely, for him to have ownership of, and lead on, and I'm now able to sit back a little on things...

AM: So things like day-to-day maintenance...?

CO: That's great, I've got two part-time technicians to come in and do that. I was doing all that before, or having to bring a freelancer in, which becomes another layer of management, it becomes something else to manage, and you get 'oh I forgot to 'phone' and stuff like that. As I said most of my job now is pushing paper around, it's spreadsheets, it's budget-tracking, it's scheduling, it's e-mail correspondence, and transport companies and all that sort of thing, so I like to get my hands dirty when I can, because that's where I came from, the practical side of things, I'm not a theoretical person at all and so I have to get stuck-in on certain things otherwise I'd think I'd gone mad, but I also want to maintain my knowledge of the space and I want to know what's happening in the spaces during an install, I want to know what the guys are doing, what problems they're facing and how we can solve those problems, and I need to be the interface between the technicians and the artist and curators if there's any kind of dispute coming up or indeed if there's any great celebration, I need to be the person who passes that on to the guys, because I have to be the one who says, "thank you very

much for your compliment, but actually there's this team of people that do it, and they did, not me. I just put them in the right place at the right time".

AM: Do the technicians get included in invitations for the dos?

CO: Yes, we always do that, VIP ones as well. That's another thing we've worked on... Godfrey the new director is brilliant at that kind of thing. He's one of the first people who's come in at the top here and understood that you don't have all this happening without this team of people. The curators have this idea and you can bring the works over from wherever, but if you haven't a technical team, and a technical team that has a nice touch to things, and a pride in what they do, and a feel for the space, then you haven't really got a great show.

AM: How long do you think it takes to get a feel for the space?

CO: I'm still doing it really... it's an odd thing... we've changed the spaces so much... I think I've probably got the best feel for the spaces here of anybody, because I spend so much time with them, and the most time thinking about them, and I have the propensity to feel the 'charge' of the space... I sometimes get involved where I will suggest an alternative space for certain artists... we've used the big stairwell here for a couple of things which has been really exciting working with an artist developing a piece of work in that stairwell because it's such a charged atmosphere, such an exciting space and sometimes it's nice to work outside the 'white cube'.

AM: I've walked the spaces here lots of times... when I go to spaces I tend to look at the spaces as much as the show...

CO: Mmmm... I do as well...

AM: ... and I've always thought the spaces here must be really hard... the very top space particularly...

CO: The top space is a wonderful, wonderful challenge for an artist and I look forward to the day when someone comes up with something that really blows the roof off in there... it's a fantastic space, but it's a very imposing space and it really cries out for something with incredible subtle beauty or something that's got real balls to make it work and... it's the nicest space to work in, especially on a sunny day with the blinds open, it's lovely, and you can kick a football around in there, and it's got all that air... the only bad side is it's got that balcony overlooking you so you do feel as if you're being watched as you're working, and that's something that's nice about BALTIC, if the galleries are closed people can still see what's going on. I do say to my colleagues in visitor services, 'OK we'll bring a daily tour of visitors around and we'll put them in your office and they can watch you work and just see how you feel', because it's quite an odd thing to have to put up with... but there's ways around that, I suppose we can be more entertaining in what we do... but the other side of it is that even in the throes, the machinations of putting a show together, as will probably be your experience, it doesn't really matter how much adherence you have to things like health and safety when something has to be done... and you focus on that one thing and you forget... my fear is that someone from the HSE is having a day off, looks over there and realises that two of the eight people aren't wearing their hi-vis and hard hats and then we could have a shit-storm on our hands...

AM: We used to paint the ICA gallery with a scaffolding tower, a Ramones' LP and a gramme of speed, with the people up the tower off their heads, and playing fast loud music, the others pushing them along... we could paint the gallery in about forty minutes, but if anyone...

CO: I saw the painters in Vienna when I was working there using the wooden step ladders as stilts... they would straddle them like that and work along the wall and I was stood there like that... I really admire that because it is really skilful, but there's no way in hell could you even contemplate that in Britain... it's just a complete and utter no-no... so that's another side of things. We are a very public space, which in many respects limits us, it limits the kind of shows we do, it limits the kind of exhibits we put on, although we were able on the Kendall Geers show, on the tour of that show, we were only the second venue out of all of them that was able to do the burning car piece that we did and that was because of some very careful planning... my colleague James who's boss of the building... we had proper gas engineers to fix the pipes to that and we had carbon monoxide detectors on it and we had failsafe, and failsafe and failsafe... to what, at the end of the day, was just a small gas flame coming out the engine compartment of a burnt-out car, but it all had to be safe... as it was propane which is heavier than air and can gather, we redesigned the torch for them, simply so we could show it and have all the safety covered.

AM: So there's quite extensive problem solving going on throughout the team...

CO: Every show's a challenge. You look at some shows and, on paper, you think "oh, that's very easy", a bunch of watercolours in frames on the wall, but it's never as simple

as that... there'll always be something... you might find out last minute that one of the stipulations is 30 lux, and it's already been decided to put those works on Level 4, and you're going to really struggle to 30 lux on Level 4... Level 3, no problem, so... to go back to knowledge of the spaces, there's something that forms another kind of tension between curatorial and technical, the tendency to have an idea, get very excited about it, which I share, and then going aaaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrrrggggggghhhhhhhh, and put it in this space and then little old me comes along, as bad cop, and say 'you can't put it in that space, because of floor loading, climate control, height, whatever...' and then it's like, "well... that's the space we'd like to put it in, so solve the problem, Chris..." and sometimes I have to turn around and say, "you've got a million pounds...?" and "no we haven't" so we can't solve the problem, unless we get a blind system for the whole of the glazing of the front of the building, and that's a kind of knowledge of the space that you have to try and communicate to other people, and that seems to take the longest, actually... also because of personnel changes within the hierarchy, not that we have a strict hierarchy, because a new person comes along, a head of programme or new director and you have to explain all this stuff *all over again*.

AM: Do you feel you get trusted?

CO: I do now. I still get occasions when I think, "Why didn't you just ask me? I could have saved you a lot of grief..." particularly from other sections of the organisation, and that's more annoying, when people go off and do things, and get themselves in a right mess, and you just think, "Why didn't you ask? In five minutes I could have told you not to do that, or this is the way to do it." It's the knowledge I have. I do get trusted. There were a couple of occasions with the previous director, Peter, where I actually pulled the

plug on an idea, and he trusted my judgement... it got him in a bit of a tailspin as he needed to find a new show. I just pointed out that it wasn't, in the time scale, possible. It was an Anish Kapoor show, a very, very complicated one, and we only had two months to put it together...

AM: I did his "Void Field" piece for him, years ago, the big stones, the one that went to Venice...

CO: This was the spiral of smoke, disappearing up into the roof. When I talked to the guy, the consultant engineer, and when I told him the time scale, he just started laughing... "No way, absolutely no way! It doesn't give you time to do the pressure readings" ... but the big blocks?

AM: (Laughs) It's not a good experience working with ...

CO: So I've heard. I've got a few like that, but anyway... I think the thing is that sometimes things get over-complicated because there are so many different layers, so many different strata of communication so you have to engage yourself with, and I believe in engaging myself with..., I don't believe in just shutting off - much as you want to sometimes - "Jesus, get the hell out of here..." You've got to keep bouncing the ideas around, and communicating, and that's probably one of the most difficult things. There was a famous general who said something along the lines of, "You can give people the means by which to communicate, but you can't necessarily make them use them."

AM: That's very true. My weakness as a gallery manager was that sometimes I found it hard to communicate right across curatorial teams, just to say, "this is what's going

on..."You try to do it, you make an effort not to keep too much in your head, but you're concentrating so much...

CO: That's the thing I've always found difficult, I'll confess completely... with the amount I've got banging around in my head at any one time there's sometimes just this white noise and focussing is very difficult. I was thinking about it on the way to work this morning, because I've just had a week off and I've come back to work thinking 'shit, I've got so much to do, so much to think about, [recounts personal story] and you're trying to find head-space, and at the same time you've got to come to work, and you've got to get a resolution on this, this, this, and this today, or at least by the end of this week, otherwise you're in deep shit when you come to the turnaround, because we start turnaround again in a couple of weeks. So there's lots to think about. Then there's crazy things like... it's the end of the financial year and the finance team haven't given us a budget code so I can't actually order anything for the turnaround starting in just over a week's time.

AM: And you need lead-in to get materials on site...

CO:all that. We're going to be fabricating some things for the artists and I can't buy anything at the moment. I haven't got the budget code. So there are things like that which you're having to think about... and training and awareness of this, that and the other, and looking for opportunities to feel like you're not always working in a vacuum, a BALTIC vacuum, and you get to go outside now and again and see what the rest of the world is doing. It's a constant full-on thing here at BALTIC, because we do have four exhibition spaces as well as the performance space which we sometimes use for programme events, and we try and make the turnarounds a kind of seasonal thing,

which makes a lot of sense with economic tracking, and that sort of thing. But it does mean that... with the last turnaround we went into installation mode on about the 16th January and we finished around the 1st April. So that's half of January, the whole of February, and the whole of March.

AM: That's a very long period. That's as long as you might spend on a site-specific project...

CO: But in that time we turned-over the ground floor, we turned-over three and four, with one show going in three and four, and then two. As you know each installation is actually two different projects because there's the taking out of the previous show, and the installation of the next one. When you have a lot of specific requirements, say, like taking out Damien Hirst's pharmacy, when you've got conservators up from the Tate, and a technician that has to come up from the Tate to oversee, and, it's great having people visiting, I love it, it's great meeting new people, but sometimes the stipulations...

AM: I was a student with Damien and remember those things lying around the studio... which have now become these lustrous objects. But that's one of the things... those conditional transformations, (C.: Absolutely.) and if you're a hand-on person I guess you cease to be reverential, you have a very direct relationship to works of art...

CO: ...and sometime things get dropped more easily if you've got conservator looking over your shoulder, and when people start getting so fennickety about things it's added pressure.

AM: I do remember the first time I worked with the Tate and I had a Makita [drill] in my hand, hanging a mirror-plated work and they said "no you can't use that you have to use this" and handed me a Yankee...

CO: Absolutely, it's insane...

AM: ... and I said "I'm much more controlled with this [the Makita] than the Yankee... if this goes off you could really damage it". I said, "Have you ever done this?" and they said "No". So... if you're being watched handling something... it's really horrifying... particularly if... at the Lisson we would have the artist and Nicholas Logsdail hanging a show, so you would be in charge of moving the work around, which could be, particularly if it was difficult work...

CO: Yes. With Anish's work, people like that...

AM: That was relatively straightforward. There was only one way they could go. Minor variations, but one ton blocks on a concrete tiled floor, you put a jig up and lift... but there's a kind of twitchiness that you get, the shaking hand... it's very odd...

CO: Well, we were gearing up to try and do a Jeff Koons show which was going to be some of his new work, some of which are selling at auction for \$26 million. And I was excited about it. We went to New York, and met Jeff, went to his studio, which was a great opportunity to see this other world. It's like Santa's workshop in there... but I was thinking "Jeeeesus, I don't want to... we're going to get other people in to handle these works, because I don't want to be the.. oh!... " because the stakes are so fucking high, just a scratch on this thing... the interesting thing is, and there's always a kind of

live, ongoing debate stroke argument here... is the protection of the work from the public. Our audience is very touchy-feely. Nobody wants to have barriers, but then nobody wants to pay out. Nobody wants to deal with the consequences of things getting damaged... and we were talking about this with the Jenny Holzer show because we had a couple of incidents fairly early on, first weekend, because, during the installation we'd already had a discussion and decided we should barrier that off as it's quite a vulnerable show, of course the artist says, "no, no, no, no barriers" and the curator of the show says "I agree, we don't want barriers" and I'm "OK, I'm out of this conversation", really, because I know what's going to happen and you never really want to be in a position where you come along and say "I told you so," but I think in our position we often get thrown into that position, because people either listen to your advice, or they don't. What can you do? So in the end we had to barrier everything off. And I was discussing this with our head of programme - this is something we've been discussing at BALTIC for a few years now to the point where a couple of years ago I wrote an e-mail just saying "I can't give you any more on this subject, so I'm not going to be involved in the discussion any more. You just tell me whether you want barriers in or not. Figure it out for yourself. Just tell me what you want to do."

AM: Do you use the ones the Tate use? The circular ones?

CO: Yeah. We've tried lines on the floor, we've tried the little blocks of wood - people trip over those, people step over the lines. It's the same experience at the Tate. I've talked to invigilators at Tate Modern, and they were saying that people just step over them so we just spend more time getting out our chairs and going "no, no, no," and people get arsy with you, and it becomes a mess, so... barriers are better. Anyway so I pointed out to [inaudible] that I've been her ten years, that's approximately twelve

exhibitions a year, so it's approximately a hundred and twenty shows I've been involved in installing here. To my memory there has never been a piece of work that's been damaged during installation or de-installation - *the* most vulnerable times for a piece of work, but I can say that out of a hundred and twenty odd shows I can say that in eighty, eighty-five something has been damaged by the public touching it, fiddling with it, climbing on it, whatever, and that's the statistic that people should be really aware of... the obvious thing is "barrier it off", of course that's going to kill some works aesthetically, completely...

AM: Also most work, now, is in a significant relationship with the space...

CO: ... it's in a relationship with the punter now, not with those of us who work with it particularly any more. The invigilators have to have a relationship... the other issue now is "how many invigilators do you need to have?" We had a basic number, which come from the visitor services budget. If we want extra invigilation... if we happen to be so inconsiderate and so inconvenient to have a show which needs a high invigilation, then that show budget has to pay for those extra invigilators, which can add an extra eighteen to twenty thousand pounds onto a show budget, so it's something that has to be considered quite carefully, so my argument to everybody is 'pay for the invigilation, or pay for a different kind of invigilation where you actually have a guy with a uniform and a peaked cap because people seem to respect that better, saying "Oi! Don't touch that or the man'll get ya!" Because our crew are there to be an interface... you can't be engaging with the audience at the same time as stopping someone climbing all over the whatever on the other side of a thirty metre long gallery. It's too much to ask them to do...

AM: My experiences of work getting damaged are it's the privileged audiences, it's the private view audiences, it's the art world, who think it's alright because 'we know what we're doing'. I've found wine glasses... I worked at a time when you could smoke at openings, add to that a wooden floor... I've had people rolling joints on minimalist sculptures, John McCracken sculptures, sitting down on things, and these are all art world people...

CO: ...people come to private views to socialise and get drunk on freebies, that's what it's all about...

AM: ... even if you remonstrate with them they'll say "oh, no, no, it's all right, I know what I'm doing", or "I'm a friend of Anish's" or whatever...

CO: ... that's exactly why, when I visit other galleries, I don't take the attitude that 'I'm an art-handler and installer, I can get close to a piece of work'. I'll respect the barrier, sometimes I have been told off because I have been leaning over too far, and there's a temptation to say, "no, no, I know what I'm doing, I'm in the business, it's fine, here's my card...", but you think that's just a really shitty thing to do, you've got to respect other people's roles...

AM: This is one thing I've found... I've been documenting spaces and I've always found... I always establish full permission to photograph and if I'm photographing somewhere I'll go in and let the invigilator know I'm taking photographs, I'm allowed to, and it's just to let them know... sound recording is weirder, you have to explain to people why you're sound recording, and they'll say 'there is no noise' and you say, "

well, actually, there is, there's quite a lot..."

CO: Absolutely. It's one of our problems here. This is building where sound carries a lot... people want to put sound pieces on floors which we can't... it's just going to go straight through the building... [laughs]... it's terrible for sound.

AM: What are the acoustics like for working in the spaces?

CO: D'you know... they're kind of weird... often the guys will have a little iPod dock for some music and sometimes those sound really good even though they're tiny little things at one end of the room, yet you do something in the bigger spaces with a proper P.A. etc., and it's terrible... level four is a nightmare...

AM: I was actually thinking of when you're installing a show, not so much about reproduced sound but about you being able to hold a conversation with someone next to you...

CO: Oh... it's fine, you notice the void-like space in level four obviously... yeah it's not really a problem... it's not a harsh... it's not crisp like it is in here... the acoustics of a room like this are really awful for any long-term exposure...

AM: I remember in the Lisson 'old' space particularly, which had a concrete floor, that had points where you could stand this far from somebody and they wouldn't be able to hear you... it also meant that, as a viewer, you experienced an entirely different level of intimacy with the space as you moved around it... does that occur in any of these spaces?

CO: I think it does, to a certain extent, yeah, I guess it would be determined by how we reconfigured the spaces, which we've done extensively over the years but which we're kind of not now ...

AM: You tend to do it very well. I've noticed...

CO: My philosophy is that if you build a wall it's got to look permanent, because if people come back, if they are return visitors, I want them to walk into the space and go, "Was it like this before? I can't remember." And fool them in that way. We like to keep as much of the previous build as we can for the next show and then just subtly change it, so that it still looks different.

AM: This is something I'm interested in, the impression of effortlessness, of permanence...

CO: I think it's got to look effortless... I've got to say our jobs done best if we're invisible...

AM: That chimes exactly with my own understanding...

CO: ... if nobody knows what we've done and nobody knows exactly how we've done it then that's... I'm prepared to tell people if they ask me, but other than that it's like wsshht and we disappear into the night like the pixie shoemakers or something like that... I don't mind that at all, it's nice to be backroom, it's nice to be anonymous in a way. It's nice to have your achievements recognised, and our director does do that, he'll

say "once again the spaces have been transformed by Chris and the team ..." which is a nice thing to have... it's not necessary... as long as the artists appreciate it, as long as the people close to the project appreciate it how much has gone into it, which is actually sometimes more of a problem, because you will get this thing whereby people will just ask for more, more, more, because I think people get into these kind of psychology that they just turn up at BALTIC and they've seen what we've achieved already and they've maybe seen the quality of the stuff we've done before and then they just expect that they can just keep adding things on and on and on... and that's where I have to come in as bad cop and finally go, "well, we've only got thirty-five pence left, so, that's not really possible, is it? In two days? So, forget it."

AM: Do you go into the installations with an idea that you will achieve this kind of effortlessness? That that's very much part of the ethos of...?

CO. Yes, that's very much part of the... Christ! That's going to be a lot of effort to do that, and there will, inevitably, be things that get discussed in meetings and planning sessions and you go, "well... the only way we'll be able to do this is to dig a hole in the floor or we'll build a huge wall across the back there...", and it sometimes works, when you're planning so far ahead and planning schedules and you're working with *an* idea of a show from an artist which you've only seen on paper so far as a thing plopped in the middle of the floor with some lights on it, and then within that process, closer to the actual time you get, "No, actually what I'd like to do is this thing with live chickens which run down this tube and then over the top..." and then it's like, "Shit! We've only actually got two weeks, to do all that now, which is insane." So, that's when I need the support of my colleagues to turn around and go, "Sorry, we can't do that."

AM.: You are, after all, representing the institution...

CO: I'm also representing in some ways, the public purse, the revenue we get. That sounds ... workaday, but it's a job, a profession, there's no professional organisation of gallery and technical managers, you don't go to study like a curator - they can walk around with a kind of badge - I'm not being disparaging her, it's just a fact - and lots of us do it because it's more than a job, it's a vocation, it's something we believe in, we enjoy doing, or, at some point in the past, *did* enjoy doing... [laughs] but I think it has to be treated like a job, in terms of scheduling, and *certainly* in terms of economics, the budgets and and for people to understand if you don't give us the information that's pertinent to getting this thing delivered on time because that's the day it's been advertised as its going to open, then we will start to run into difficulties where we're having to work late, where we're having to work seven days - there's been times in the past when we've worked - the British Art Show - I worked six weeks, seven days a week, without a day off... not only is that against the European Working Time Directive, it's completely illegal, it's not fair...

AM: ...it's destructive...

CO: ...it's destructive, and also that overtime was unpaid, as we do time-off-in-lieu, and I lost all the time-off-in-lieu, so effectively I did all those extra hours for free, all because, quite frankly, National Touring Exhibitions produced a very late information process - it was a very live process and kept changing, and at that time, because of BALTIC, it was during the phase when I was the technical team, everything was reliant

on bringing freelance people in, for which there wasn't a budget, in terms of having development assistance, and I spent most of my time redesigning the layout, I must have designed the thing about twenty times...

AM: They're a nightmare those big shows. I've done a couple of 'New Contemporaries' at the ICA as a technician and they were always...

CO: So, after the experiences over the years, I've become clear in my mind, there's certain amount of extra time, extra work that goes with the territory, that's accepted, you have to get involved in these things. I am a manager, that's fine. But when the situation starts to take the piss out of it that's the time you have to put your foot down and just go, "I'm not going to work for free." It's as simple as that, and if I'm being pushed into a situation where that's happening, then that is an unfair situation, and it means that something is wrong, and I'm not getting my information feeds properly, or there's something stopping me being able to cover the workload, or I'm just an incredibly lazy bastard, who never does anything, which I don't think is the case, because I've proved that not to be the case.

AM: I was thinking, one of the first times I came to Newcastle I was sent up to supervise something, I can't remember what it was, at the Laing Gallery, and the technical crew were the same blokes who walked around the galleries, the porters...

CO: It's still the same...

AM: ... and we had to get something up by the next day, and at four o'clock they all said, "Right, we're off home." And I was left, on my own, to put this thing up... and I've

sort-of come to understand why they might be like that...

CO: ... and I have as well...

AM: ...and I... in the latter part of my career as a gallery manager I insisted upon regular hours, stopped at six, insisted on breaks, managed things so you kept it all within that, rather than this kind of crazy...

CO: ... which we've managed to do here. We haven't had a show for some time where we've had to do the working 'till two o'clock in the morning, the last one was, I think, Wang Du, and that was simply because this thing arrived on these trucks with no instructions... a structure which weighed eighteen and a half tons, tubes made out of cast-iron rings, which was insane, scratching your head, getting lifting companies in, so the whole thing was delayed. We didn't even have correct dimensions, we didn't know it was going to fit in the gallery when we built it... it was insane, absolutely insane, but we built it, we got through it. But I am insisting on it more... there are a couple of reasons: I can't be asked to predict what a show is going to cost labour-wise unless I can certainly say the guys are going to work nine hours a day, five days a week, and this is how many there are going to be... because we're not allowed to put contingencies in...

AM: You're not...!

CO: No... so I'm being asked to fairly accurately predict how much a show's going to cost to install...

AM: I've never done anything without at least a five per-cent contingency...

CO: ... so what I do is I put a few extra days in here and there, because I know I might have to work a Saturday. I resist very strongly working on Sundays, because I think everybody needs a day off. I get very uppity when I find an artist is arriving on a Saturday and wants to carry on over the weekend, especially when you've already been working three weeks solidly... this happened last time and I said, "well, I'm not going to be here, I've got a date, I'm doing something with my partner. It's not of any interest to you what it is that I'm doing, but I'm already booked in, elsewhere, simple as that. My colleague can't do it, he's got a little baby, you can't treat people like this, you can't just turn up and expect everyone to drop their life, that is really, really unfair." And that is something that needs to be very clear in your contract, and goes for everybody in this situation, it should be unusual circumstances, it shouldn't be the assumption... there's nothing puts your back up more than people assuming things. The other reason we should keep to normal working hours is we need to know where everybody is, know when they're going on their break, we can schedule with those hard facts. If the guys have a lunch from one 'till two, and transport truck arrives...

AM: [Laughs] ... they always did...

CO: Fine, we can deal with it, but they've got to have a break, and so, if you're an artist coming along to help with the installation, or a travelling technician or whatever, then we start at nine o'clock and we generally finish at six. If you waltz in at two o'clock, then that's your problem, not ours, we've been clear, we've clearly said we will be flexible, we've clearly said we can work a bit later, but it needs to be cleared in advance, because people have lives, people have children. If you have two little ones at

home you can't do these hours, so what would the organisation do then, if I didn't put in these extra hours... when people get tired, accidents happen, and they make mistakes... we had one of our freelance technicians collapse who we had to take to the hospital because he'd been working so hard, so intensely... it affects people in different ways. For some reason, he hadn't been eating properly, and the doctors said he was suffering from exhaustion...

AM: I had a period when I suffered from exhaustion. On a regular basis, the Lisson Gallery used to schedule photo-shoots at night, so I'd work an eight-hour day, then have to install a show overnight to be photographed say, take it down, put the existing one back in, and I had an exhausted breakdown. One of the people who followed me as gallery manager at the Lisson had to work at the weekend, on his own once, came off a ladder and fractured his pelvis, and spent two days... he couldn't get to the 'phone, he was only found on Monday morning, with a fractured pelvis in the gallery space...

CO: When was that? Was it a while ago?

AM: Early nineties, mid nineties...

CO: H.S.E. would be all over that now, that would end up in court... and that's something people have to understand. We have to work within some pretty rigid frameworks around health and safety, and we *have* to do that... so it's like the Jenny Holzer, and guys from America and guys from Switzerland get in touch with me, "We need scissor lifts," and we say "no problem, have you a licence?" and the Swiss guy goes, "licence? We don't need a licence." "You do here." "So we can't use a scissor lift

on your premises without a license." "No, it's called IPAF, international powered access licence, it's valid all over the world, get yourself one." But we have to have them, so I have to allocate freelance technicians who have their IPAF just to drive the scissor lift up and down, while the other guy does his thing, which is a bit insane, but, hey, what can I do about it? Nothing.

AM: What's your view on volunteers? Interns, etc., working on installations?

CO: We have a minimum of that, because it's too complicated. We do think we'd like to try to develop more, it's something we've revisited after many years lay-off, of the people on the crew, the actual invigilators getting involved on the installations, but we have to manage that quite carefully. Some of them have had ladders' training, for example, so that's fine, "you *can* go up a ladder", generally they help us out with little bits of admin., condition reports, just moving the paperwork around, helping with little fiddly jobs, like with the Damien Hirst, helping to take all the boxes out of the other boxes, and put them on the shelves, just helping with those little, fennickety, time-consuming things... and what we've done with them, those that are interested, we've done an interview, in which we pointed out, "it's not all glamour, this job... [both laugh] ... eighty-five percent of most installations is shovelling shit from one place to another, and there's very little glamour involved, and a lot of the jobs are really, really boring, and there are very few of them that are exciting, and if you think we're going to get you involved in anything exciting like driving fork-lift truck, or assessor lift, forget it, because you can't, you haven't got your ticket, so you're going to be involved in these other things, you're going to be a bit of a runner and things like that...", and it seems to work fine because those ones that are interested now are the ones that are keen to find out

about the process, and seeing the process from the inside, which is fantastic, and they've been a great help, but someone else has to manage that in a sense, so Laura, our exhibitions co-ordinator looks after that side of things, so they just ask me if there's anything that need to be done on a daily basis, so we do it that way.

AM: There's one area I'd like to talk to you about, it's updating my own knowledge... the big thing that's changed since I stopped doing what you do is digital photography, and a big part of my job was always involved in documentary photography, not just formal installation photography, but informal photography, taking Polaroids of taking things out of crates, condition reporting, things like that, and part of my PhD is creating a documentary archive between the formal and informal... I don't really know how you work with informal photography now. Do you all use digital cameras? Is the paperwork for most works of art now a PDF file, or does it go round on memory sticks...?

CO: Yes... well there's still a lot of scribbling on sheets of paper, which then gets electronically stored... actually a lot of it gets printed out and put in folders because you need a signature on it... but we do use digital photography, and one could argue that you can manipulate digital photography quite easily in Photoshop, and in some ways a Polaroid would be better, but... come on... it's about one pound twenty a shot for a Polaroid, if you can still get the film... that's a really expensive process... and that's got to be balanced out... 'is that really necessary?' We used to use a Polaroid camera, I don't know what's happened to it. One thing about digital is you can e-mail the image straight to somebody on the other side of the world...

AM: If you were using a Polaroid you had to be quite judicious about what you photographed, and how you photographed it. You didn't just photograph willy-nilly, you

might take half-a-dozen of something particularly complicated coming out of a case to show where all the struts went etc., whereas now I guess you can just shoot it all really simply...?

CO: All the freelance techs use their cameras if they're starting to unpack, they just go 'bang' and picture what we've just seen or what's just happened, or on their 'phones. even, so we're always conscious of getting documentation, and that documentation has helped us out in so many things that have turned into disputes, just an e-mail trail where you can go, 'Aha!' What we said on such-and-such is...' and then silence after that, if someone's trying to get one over on you...

AM: So for the formal photography? That which previously would have been done on large-format... is that still done here? Or would the artist's gallery come in and take some installation shots?

CO: Both. Generally for installations we get a local guy who has a lot of experience of doing gallery installation shots... it's done digitally, sometimes he'll use large-format. He may have large-format digital backs. He's a guy who's been working with us for years and has been a commercial photographer for a long, long time. But then some artists will insist on sending some guy in, but it depends on whether there's a catalogue in the offing, as sometimes the guy who documents the show isn't going to be the best for catalogue shots, as they're two different reasons in some ways... we're pretty flexible about most things, we're not terribly rigid on anything really, and I think we should be in some cases certainly. We can accommodate most things really... [sneezes several times]... I like the archaeology that's involved in installing shows... I was doing something recently and it involved having to cut into the walls and it made you realise

how many layers of paint had built up over ten years, there's a considerable thickness, it's getting on for a millimetre, which is a fascinating thing, and strata of different colours as well... we've still got... on level three we've walled-off columns in there, and it's been like that for a long time, because it makes more sense on three in terms of hanging space, but it's created a little corridor which we use for storage, there's also evidence of a previous show which relied on wallpaper, some of that's still there because we've never got round to stripping it off, because it was a devil of a job to get it off... I'm always coming across bits and pieces that we've made for previous shows... we've made a custom projector bracket or something to put speakers on or a little shelf to put a book on and you're always loathed to throw these things away, because an awful lot of effort's gone into them and you end up with this big store of things you might need... I'm a terrible hoarder... but it's nice to come across these things, it's nice to have memories and we go underneath the floor sometimes, because we have those grilles, which contain power sources as well, so we get them up quite often, and all the crap ends up down those grilles, as you imagine, but you'll find cables... there's still cables under there from the Susan Hiller installation, which was the second or third show, and then there'll be pencils and two-pence-pieces and strange odd fixings and fastenings which have come off far flung places... and that's part of the life of the place, which we know about, and nobody else does... I worked on a show once with Locus Plus and we used a space on what is now the Irish Centre, on the edge of Chinatown, here in Newcastle, an artist called Shane Cullen, who'd done these hand, sign-written panels, which were letters from the H-Block prisoners, their letters back home to their families, very, very moving piece, and these panels went right along the wall, and we were doing this in a disused space which we had to clear up, and part of the clear-up job, the preparation was quite archaeological because we discovered these patches on the old wooden floor there and we brushed these, and scrubbed these, and

we couldn't get rid of these, they kept coming back. We found out the place had been used as sprinting works, and these were the ghosts of the printing presses, where they leaked oil, ink, into the floor, and of course this was wonderful and Shane, the artist, was really into this as he was hand-painting these texts and so it was lovely that it was in this place with the charge of it being a printing works, and also at some point in its time it had been a banana warehouse, so there were all these layers of history going back... so that's absolutely fascinating to do that kind of thing, and as we get close to being open for ten years here, we've built up a history of...

AM: I can remember the walls at the ICA, that space had been used since the late sixties, and you could trace it... you could also pick up the trends in installation. At one point they had silvered the gallery wall... you were looking at that kind of thickness of paint, three or four mill., and there was this silver strata running through it, which was a Tim Head installation from the 1970s I think, it was extraordinary...

CO: Oh, the spaces take some punishment... in a contemporary space you're always challenging the structure, and it's like you always say to someone who's thinking of doing a show... my favourite example is, "you can do anything if you've got the money, you can take the roof off the top space, as long as you've got enough money to put it back on again and make it water-tight"... in some ways the more challenging the better...

3.2: E-mail to eyebeam mailing list from Hans Ulrich-Obrist

To: EYEBEAM <eyebeam@list.thing.net<eyebeam@list.thing.net>>

Subject: <eyebeam><blast> Alexander Dorner

From: Hans Ulrich Obrist <HUU@compuserve.com>

Date: Wed, 1 Apr 1998 08:45:59

Reply-To: eyebeam-list@list.thing.net

Sender: eyebeam-list@list.thing.net

Alexander Dorner etc.... "everything is inbetween"

I would like to mention a few pioneering examples of curatorial positions of inbetweenness which I find relevant at present. They all contributed to the mutation of existing museums and exhibition structures but also pushed the boundaries and towards the invention of new interdisciplinary structures. In the words of Sandberg, former director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam: "With the courage of the unacademic and the radical, according to the necessities of contemporary art".

Felix Feneon has in the early 20th century bridged different fields and has sought continuously for new forms of display and mediation. He made projects with daily newspapers as it temporarily seemed the most appropriate space but he also founded his own magazines. He published books and organized exhibitions. Feneon defined the curator as a Passerelle (pedestrian bridge) between the artist and the world.

Harry Graf Kessler also pursued mobile strategies of display and mediation. He was a junction-maker between artists, architects and writers. From time to time he organized exhibitions to put the art of his salons into a larger social and political context. Kessler (sic) also pursued publishing activities parallel to his exhibition organizing. Herwarth Walden was a similarly open mediator between the disciplines. He founded the art school "Der Sturm", his own publishing house, and ran an exhibition space as an open hybrid laboratory for small exhibitions. In 1913 Walden organized the first German Salon of Autumn, with more than 360 works by eighty of the most important artists of the time.

Alexander Dorner who ran the Hannover Museum in the 1920s defined the museum as a "Kraftwerk". He invited artists such as El Lissitzky to realise a contemporary , dynamic display of a museum on the move. Dorner emphasizes in his writings "Ueberwindung der Kunst" (going beyond art), that he intended to dynamize the often too static museum and to transform the neutral white cube in order to assume a more heterogenous space. Dorner succeeded in pseudo-neutral space of the 19th century which was still prevailing and to get to what to functions which accompany a museum today. The importance of Dorner lies in the fact that he anticipated very early the urgency of issues such as:

- the museum in permanent transformation within dynamic parameters
- a dynamic concept of art history, as John Dewey wrote, it is through Dorner that we are "amidst a dynamic centre of profound transformations".
- The museum as an oscillation between object and process: "The processual idea has penetrated our system of certainties" (Dorner).
- the multi-identarian museum
- the museum on the move
- the museum as a risk-taking pioneer: to act and not to wait!
- the museum as a locus of crossings of art and life.....
- the museum as a laboratory
- the museum as a relative and not an absolute truth or in the words of Marcel Broodthaers "every museum in one truth which is surrounded by many other truths."
- the elastic museum which means: both elastic display and elastic building
- bridges between the artists, the museum and other disciplines.

In Dorner's own words: "We cannot understand the forces which are effective in the visual production of today if we do not have a look at other fields of modern life"

Hans Ulrich Obrist

Appendix 4: Exhibitions, publications, conferences, awards

4.1: Exhibitions (during PhD research)

Solo:

Monkey Business	Gallery North PS, Newcastle	16/01/2009-13/02/2009
Monkey Business	Zeppelin University, Friedrichshafen, Germany	15/07/2010 onward

(Semi-permanent installation)

Group:

The Coma Lounge	Collective Gallery, Edinburgh	12/2008 - 02/2009
Vit. PhD (Packing for the Crash)	Gallery North, Newcastle	16/07/2009 - 13/08/2009

4.2: Publications:

The Go Between: Methodologies and taxonomies between museums, galleries, creative practice and learning. Vol. 2. ed. Dan Allen. University of Glamorgan, 2010. (in production)

Politik des Zeigens (cover), eds. Karen van den Berg, Hans Ulrich Gumbert. Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Paderborn, 2010. (in production)

4.3: Conferences

The Go Between: Methodologies and taxonomies between museums, galleries, creative practice and learning.

9th – 12th Sept. 2009, Univ. of Glamorgan/National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

Son et Lumière:

The paper takes the form of a brief (10-15 minute) presentation of photographic images accompanied/interspersed with ambient sound recordings made within exhibition and museum spaces. I would be happy to respond to questions or commentary at the end of the presentation, but think it important that the body of the presentation is isolated from textual narrative.

The purpose is twofold, the primary intention being documentary – the images afford an insight into an artist's documentary investigation into the objects and spaces in and on display, a viewpoint distinct from the art historical or museological trajectory of much critical thinking on the subject and informed by the artist's advanced expertise in the realisation of display and exhibition at the highest levels. The sound is proposed as a documentary act, alternative from, or analogous to, the photograph, one that spatially and temporally displaces the act of display.

It is, however, testing another function or possibility, which is to show how an object might 'experience' the process of display, an inversion of the documentary act to *that of being the agent of the object, rather than that of the audience.*

4.4: Awards

2007:	Kerr-Fry Research Award	University of Edinburgh
2006:	Bursary	East Lothian Educational Trust
2006:	Doctoral Award	Arts & Humanities Research Council
2006:	Bursary	East Lothian Educational Trust

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C.V.

1993 - 1995: University of London, Goldsmiths' College. M.A., Fine Art.
 1984 - 1987: University of London, Goldsmiths' College. B.A. Hons., Fine Art. (First Class)
 1981 - 1982: St. Martin's School of Art, London. Foundation Course.

Exhibitions:

One Person:

2010	Monkey Business No. 32	Zeppelin University, Friedrichshafen, Germany
2009:	Monkey Business	Gallery North PS, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
2003:	Andrew McNiven	protoacademy, Edinburgh
2002:	Witten Apparatus	Witten Town Hall, Germany
1999:	Possum's Fargo	readysteadymade, Glasgow
1997:	Hamburg from 987 kms.	Philip Mecklenburg, Hamburg, Germany*
1992:	Remote Sensing	ACAVA Central Space/Riverside Studios, London
1990:	Artist of the Day	Flowers East, London (Selector: Richard Wentworth)*

Group:

2009:	Packing for the Crash	Gallery North, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
2008:	The Coma Lounge	Collective Gallery, Edinburgh
2000:	<i>Bleibe</i>	Akademie der Kunst, Berlin*
1996:	<i>Ferne im Innern</i>	Town Hall, Witten, Germany, & Neue Galerie, Dachau, Germany*
1996:	50x50x50	Bank, London*
1994:	Convento da Arrabida	Lisbon, Portugal (as part of Cultural Capital of Europe)*
1994:	Whitechapel Open	Whitechapel Art Gallery, London*
1993:	2 out of 4	Centre 181 Gallery, London
1993:	Wonderful Life	Lisson Gallery, London
1992:	A Simple Twist of Fate	Riverside Studios, London
1985:	New Contemporaries	Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

(*Denotes publication)

Employment:

2000 – 2004 Lecturer, School of Drawing and Painting, Edinburgh College of Art.
 1987 -2000 Gallery and project manager, exhibition designer and studio assistant. Employers include: Lisson Gallery, Camden Arts Centre, ICA London, Architectural Association, Camerawork, Interim Art, Lux Europae, Richard Wentworth, Hannah Collins, Grenville Davey, National Art Collections Fund, and many others.

Press

(Review of 'Monkey Business', exhibition at Zeppelin University from Südkurier, July 2010. Written by Harald Rüppert)

Das Brummen von Mondrian

„Curating the context“ lautet das Motto von Ulrike Shepherd, der Leiterin des Artsprogramms der Zeppelin-Universität. Es bedeutet, dass im Zentrum einmal weniger das isolierte Kunstwerk steht, als die Zusammenhänge, in die die Kunst eingebracht wird.

Denn ob Kunst für sich genommen überhaupt eine Aussage besitzt, oder ob diese nicht vielmehr von ihrem jeweiligen Umfeld abhängt, ist eine untersuchenswerte Frage. Ihr widmet sich auch der schottische Künstler Andrew McNiven. Er eröffnete am Donnerstag in den ZU-Räumen im Fallenbrunnen 18 eine Fotoausstellung, die sich mit Ausstellungsbedingungen auseinandersetzt. Mit der Kamera streifte er durch berühmte Museen, um Inszenierungssituationen einzufangen. Dabei zeigt er etwa den gewaltigen Aufwand, der getrieben wird, nur um der Kunst einen eigenen Wirkraum zu verschaffen: Die Gestaltung der Ausstellungsfläche für die Ausstellung „Global Cities“ in der Tate Modern zeigt ein architektonisches Großunternehmen – eine Inszenierung, die nach der Fertigstellung wiederum hinter der Kunst, für die sie geschaffen wurde, zurückstehen soll. Das stellt auch die Frage, ob der „White Cube“ überhaupt noch zeitgemäß ist: In Zeiten der Globalisierung lernen wir, dass alles mit allem verflochten ist. Für die Kunst erlaubt man es sich aber, diese Komplexität hinwegzuleugnen und ihr autonome Räume zu schaffen; eine anachronistische Praxis, die ironischerweise eine Erscheinung der unübersichtlichen Moderne ist.

McNiven geht in der Dramaturgie seiner kleinen Ausstellung in der ZU sehr clever vor: Wer durch den weiß gestrichenen Flur mit den dominanten Bürotüren geht, kann unmöglich die Ausstellung als Ganzes sehen. Die Fotografien sind sehr klein, sie verschwinden fast im räumlichen Kontext, und man muss sehr nah an die Wand herantreten, um sie zu betrachten. McNiven betont den scheinbar übermächtigen Kontext, in dem seine Arbeiten stehen, und paradoxerweise wird gerade durch die Kleinheit der Kunst ihre Kraft gesteigert. Zugleich parodiert McNiven den Inszenierungscharakter, was diesen wiederum hervorhebt: Die Fotografien ziehen sich zusammen, ihre gesetzten Titel hingegen besitzen eine vergleichsweise gigantische Größe.

Die Inszenierung der Kunst ist so wichtig wie die Kunst selbst, und doch versucht die Inszenierung stets, sich zu entziehen – etwa so wie Filmmusik, die die dramatischen Stellen des Films erst dramatisch macht, verschwindet sie unter dem Deckmantel der Dienlichkeit und wird als eigenständiges Element kaum wahrgenommen. McNiven hat die Geister gebannt, und er hat sie mit an die Zeppelin-Universität gebracht – in den kaum vernehmbaren Klängen einer Soundinstallation. Ein schwaches Brummen liegt in der Luft; es handle sich um den Klang eines Ausstellungsraums in Edinburgh, unmittelbar neben einem Gemälde von Mondrian, sagt Andrew McNiven. Dieses Geräusch hat er aufgenommen. Anstatt sich am Verschiebebahnhof des Kunstbetriebs zu beteiligen, in dem Kunst eingepackt, verschickt und an einem anderen Ort wieder ausgepackt wird, lässt McNiven die Kunst, wo sie ist und bringt stattdessen ihren Ort, ihren Kontext mit – als auratisches Hintergrundrauschen.

Permissions/Consents

From Chris Osborne, Technical Manager, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art



CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: 'Monkey Business': an artist's action research into the parameters of temporary gallery installation through reflexive formal and informal documentary practice.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher: Andrew McNiven:
PhD Researcher: Bryniago, 53 Maesmawr, Rhayader, Powys, LD6 5PL.
mcniven@btinternet.com

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.

Please tick box

Yes No

Please highlight the appropriate research method in this section of the consent form:

4. I agree to the discussion / interview / work shop / consultation being audio recorded
5. I agree to the discussion / interview / work shop / consultation being video recorded
6. I agree to the use of anonymised / non-anonymised quotes in publications



Research Council
Arts & Humanities

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Please initial box

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CO

Selected Sound Recordings:

Accompanying the thesis document is a CD containing examples of six audio recordings taken from my evolving 'archive' of sound, namely:

1. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, Room 3 (European Modernism): Piet Mondrian, *Composition With Double Line and Yellow*, 1932.
1'.00"
2. *Monkey Business No. 29*, (Warhol, Lichtenstein, 1972). 2009
1'.00"
3. *Monkey Business No. 32*, (Sigmund Freud). 2009.
3'17"
4. Wallace Collection, XVI Century Gallery: Bronzino, *Portrait of Eleanor of Toledo*, 1540-41.
1'13"
5. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, inside empty vitrine.
1'00"
6. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford: the 'Messiah' Stradivarius
1'01"

The inclusion of sound works in this format are intended as an aid to the examination of the thesis, prior to the examination proper; at this point there will be an opportunity to experience sound works that have been installed and controlled within the meaning and context of the wider research questions explored within the thesis document.